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**Virginia's United Land Trusts**

***Heritage Virginia***

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**A Strategic Plan for the  
Conservation of the  
Commonwealth's  
Natural and Cultural Resources**

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**A Joint Venture**

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# Heritage Virginia

## Virginia's United Land Trusts' Strategic Plan For Conservation of the Commonwealth's Natural and Cultural Resources

*"It shall be the policy of the Commonwealth to conserve, develop and utilize its natural resources, its public lands, and its historical sites and buildings. Further, it shall be the Commonwealth's policy to protect its atmosphere, lands and waters from pollution, impairment, or destruction for the benefit, enjoyment, and general welfare of the people of the Commonwealth."*

– Virginia Constitution, Article XI, 1950

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## I: INTRODUCTION

A basic premise of Virginia's United Land Trusts (VaULT) is that land conservation is both a mandate of Article XI of the Virginia Constitution; and essential to the Commonwealth's quality of life, to the physical and biological environment and to the traditions and economies on which that quality of life depends. As such, land conservation is a core public service that benefits all sectors of the Commonwealth.

This premise was reaffirmed at the Natural Resources Leadership Summit convened by Governor Mark Warner in April 2003 to address critical natural resource issues. Business, government and conservation leaders at the Summit unanimously called for development of a new Ethic and Vision based on Article XI and a consistent overarching land conservation goal for Virginia. According to the preliminary Summit report, "The conservation of Virginia's open space, historic and environmentally sensitive land resources was a clear and strong priority for summit participants. The focus was on the need to find alternative strategies and funding to promote easements and other forms of preservation." VaULT's strategic plan, *Heritage Virginia*, responds directly to the needs identified by the Governor's Natural Resources Leadership Summit.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this Plan is to identify strategies and actions which land trusts and their partners in state and local government, business and industry, and hometown communities can undertake within the next 3-5 years to achieve the land conservation goal envisioned by the Commonwealth's leadership. This Strategic Plan:

- Articulates the role of private land trusts as leaders in a broad partnership of public and private entities seeking to maximize conservation of shared priorities
- Sets forth the issues and challenges facing the land conservation community

- Stresses the urgent need and public demand for substantial funding for land conservation
- Recommends regional and statewide strategies for building Virginia's Green Infrastructure
- Identifies ways to enhance the capacity of private land trusts to maximize their effectiveness
- Defines opportunities for public-private partnerships and provides models of successful partnerships
- Documents priorities gathered from regional meetings of land trusts and their partners in state and local government, business and industry

## Background

Virginia's United Land Trusts (VaULT) serves as the statewide coordinating council representing the 29 private, non-profit organizations working to conserve Virginia's natural, cultural, historic, scenic and recreational resources and working forests and farmlands.

Prompted by the challenge of protecting 20 percent of the Chesapeake Bay watershed by 2010, VaULT initiated a visioning and planning process in 2001 to develop a statewide strategy for achieving this ambitious land conservation goal. In June 2001 VaULT co-hosted a visioning conference with the Virginia Department of Forestry to identify what systems and resources must be in place to not only meet the Chesapeake Bay watershed goal, but to protect significant natural and cultural resources throughout the Commonwealth. In cooperation with the Department of Forestry and Department of Conservation and Recreation, VaULT conducted a series of regional workshops throughout Virginia in the spring of 2002 to define regional and local priorities, resources and strategies for land conservation. Additional guidance has been provided through discussions with conservation leaders in the public and private sectors at national, state, regional and local levels.

This Plan presents the findings and recommendations of the VaULT planning initiative. The recommendations supplement those found in the **2002 Virginia Outdoors Plan**; they also address, in part, the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation's legislative mandate for, (1) "the protection and preservation of ecological, cultural or historic resources, lands for threatened or endangered species, fish and wildlife habitat, natural areas, agricultural and forest production and lands for recreational purposes;" and, (2) "to prepare a comprehensive plan that recognizes and seeks to implement all the purposes for which the Foundation is created."



## II: CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE

*Each generation has a rendezvous with the land ...  
by choice or by default, we will carve out a land legacy for our heirs.*

-Stewart Udall

### Virginia's "Place"

The continuum of human experience in Virginia is a long and illustrious one, dating back more than 24,000 years before John Smith's arrival in the Tidewater of the Chesapeake Bay. From the site of that First Landing, westward to the Piedmont and the Blue Ridge, through the "Great Valley" of the Shenandoah, across the Allegheny Ridges and Valleys and on to the Cumberland Gap, the history of a nation being born, torn apart and reconciling once more, is written on Virginia's landscape. Millions of Americans trace their ancestry to those who lived, fought and died here. Virginia's heritage is America's heritage.

The history of Virginia's land goes well beyond the historic events that contribute to the heritage of the nation and the Commonwealth. The land was the resource from which Native Americans, European settlers, plantation owners, slaves and indentured servants, "free-hold" farmers, lumbermen, coal companies and business interests of the past 400 years have extracted a living. These lives and resource practices have both marked and literally reconfigured the landscape, vegetation and even the topography of Virginia.

Yet in tribute to the resilience of nature, Virginia's land is still rich in a variety of flora and fauna; rivers run clearer and cleaner than in the past; many of the quiet places have retained or regained their beauty; and, in some remote corners of the Commonwealth, natural resources exist that have never been subjected to human activity. These resources – the places commemorating the historical and cultural events and the peoples of our past, the scenic beauty of old roads and byways, the current landscape of forests, farms, rural communities and fishing villages – all of these resources, and the ways of life they support, are what the land trust community is committed to conserving.

### Virginia's Challenge

In the Chinese language Wei-Ji, the characters denoting "crisis," is written as the combination of "danger" and "opportunity". This dual definition is particularly applicable to the state of land conservation in Virginia at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The degradation of air, land and water resources, the loss of unique natural and cultural resources, and the decline of traditional economies are of grave concern. The challenges facing legislators, government officials, business and industry and



the private land conservation community are pressing, and the timeframe for taking action is very short indeed. Yet opportunity does indeed knock – the opportunity to plan more wisely and comprehensively, to devise new and innovative solutions to old conundrums, and to form new partnerships for effective action. The major issues are outlined below; the opportunities for engaging these challenges are highlighted in the next chapter.

## **Land Conservation Challenges**

### **Current Commonwealth Commitments**

VaULT's Strategic Plan builds on current commitments to land conservation made by the Commonwealth of Virginia and its citizens. These include:

- **The Governor's Natural Resources Leadership Summit** focused on water policy, resource-based industries and the need to find alternative strategies and funding to promote land conservation.
- **The Chesapeake Bay 2000 Agreement** recognizes the value of the Chesapeake Bay as an economic and environmental treasure of the Commonwealth of Virginia. As a signatory to this agreement, Virginia, along with Maryland, Pennsylvania, The District of Columbia and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is committed to "permanently preserve from development 20 percent of the land area in the [Chesapeake Bay] watershed by 2010."

In Virginia the Chesapeake Bay watershed includes half of the geographic territory in Virginia including the Shenandoah Valley, Lynchburg, Richmond, Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia. To meet this goal, an additional 522,670 additional acres of land within Virginia's portion of the watershed must be conserved in the coming seven years. A study commissioned by the Chesapeake Bay Commission estimated that the total cost for meeting the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement mandate could be in excess of \$1 billion.

- **The General Assembly 2007 Anniversary Goal**, adopted three years ago, targets protection of one million acres of land (including conservation easements held by the state) by 2007, the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Jamestown. Meeting that goal will require protection of an additional 447,000 acres over the coming four years.

Virginia's citizens increasingly view resource protection and land conservation as essential public services and open space as fundamental to their quality of life.

- The 2000 Virginia Outdoors Survey, conducted by the Department of Conservation and Recreation found that 73% of citizens feel it is "very important" to protect open space resources.

- In a 2001 poll conducted by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land, nearly nine out of ten Virginians (89%) felt that “preserving and protecting open space is important.” Almost as many (82%) believed that Virginia’s natural areas will soon be lost forever; and 65% of Virginia voters supported creating a permanent source of funding for protecting farms, forests, water quality and open space.
- 69% of Virginia voters overwhelmingly approved the 2002 State Parks and Natural Areas Bond Referendum in November 2002 – even in the face of a severe state fiscal crisis
- A Mason-Dixon poll of 1200 Virginia voters in January 2003 found that “the highest percentage of voter support – 85-90% —related to preserving Virginia’s rural character and investing in our agricultural, forestry and natural resource-based industries to keep working farms, forests and open space.”

There is now a growing statewide debate about how to sustain economic vitality and control sprawl development. In the Mason-Dixon poll 75 percent of voters polled support better planning and management of growth as a solution to traffic congestion, rather than more roads; and 87 percent of the respondents stated that a candidate’s position on growth, land use and curbing sprawl will be an important consideration in the next local and statewide elections.

Virginia’s economic base is grounded in its’ natural and cultural resources. The three leading economic generators in the Commonwealth are resource-based industries: agriculture, forestry and tourism together account for nearly \$80 Billion in annual sales and support well over 600,000 jobs. State Parks return over \$38 million annually to the state treasury and historic sites are the foundation of Virginia’s \$13 billion per year tourism industry.

Despite the need to ensure the continued health of our economy and fulfill its constitutional mandate, the Commonwealth of Virginia now ranks 50<sup>th</sup> among all states in per capita spending on the protection of the land and resources so highly valued by her citizens, so essential to her economy and so integral to her history.

## **Defining the Issues**

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century a significant portion of Virginia’ resources were at risk. The lands and waters were over-timbered, over-farmed and over-polluted. By mid-century, resource recovery strategies were implemented and farm and timberlands began to recover. At the same time, however, new influences such as chemical pollutants and population increase are creating new problems and the need for new strategies to address their impacts. Today we are faced with a wide variety of interconnected issues.

General risk indicators include:

### **Funding**

- In FY 2004 the share of total state appropriations (general fund plus non-general funds) devoted to the entire Natural Resources Secretariat is less than one percent (0.96%.) Only 0.60 percent of the state's general fund is devoted to the Natural Resources Secretariat – a 52 percent decline in the Natural Resource share of the state general funds since FY2000. The lack of adequate funding is the most serious challenge to state agencies, legislators and the land conservation community as a whole. **Identified unmet fiscal needs are in the order of \$561 million per year to meet water quality and land conservation commitments, operational and maintenance requirements, and to address critical capital projects.**

### **Land Consumption**

- Virginia's population has increased by 50 percent since 1970 and is projected to grow by another 1.5 million people by the year 2025. However, the rate of land consumption in the past decade has been 2.5 times greater than the rate of population growth.
- Escalating land prices in suburban areas and home mortgage practices that fail to reward transit areas drive development ever outward into rural areas. The result is speculative land values for residential development that encourage landowners to abandon agricultural use.
- From 1992-1997 Virginia lost 105,000 acres of prime farmland to development. Nearly 120 Virginia farms disappear every year; the number of full time farms dwindled to 49,000 in 2002. An estimated 70 percent of Virginia's farmland – nearly half the total land base of the state – will change hands in the next 10-15 years as family farmers retire.
- Forestlands and farmlands are currently being converted to non-agricultural uses at the rate of 49,000 acres per year. The Virginia Department of Forestry estimates that only 8.5 million acres of privately owned lands are likely to remain available for timber production – a quantity unable to sustain the current rate of harvest, and consequently the long- term economic base of timberland.

In April 2002, the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Department of Forestry, with assistance from The Nature Conservancy and Chesapeake Bay Foundation, prepared a report for the Speaker of the House and the Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources, entitled, *Open Space Preservation and Land Conservation in Virginia*. Based on this report, Virginia has a land cover of approximately 25 million acres.

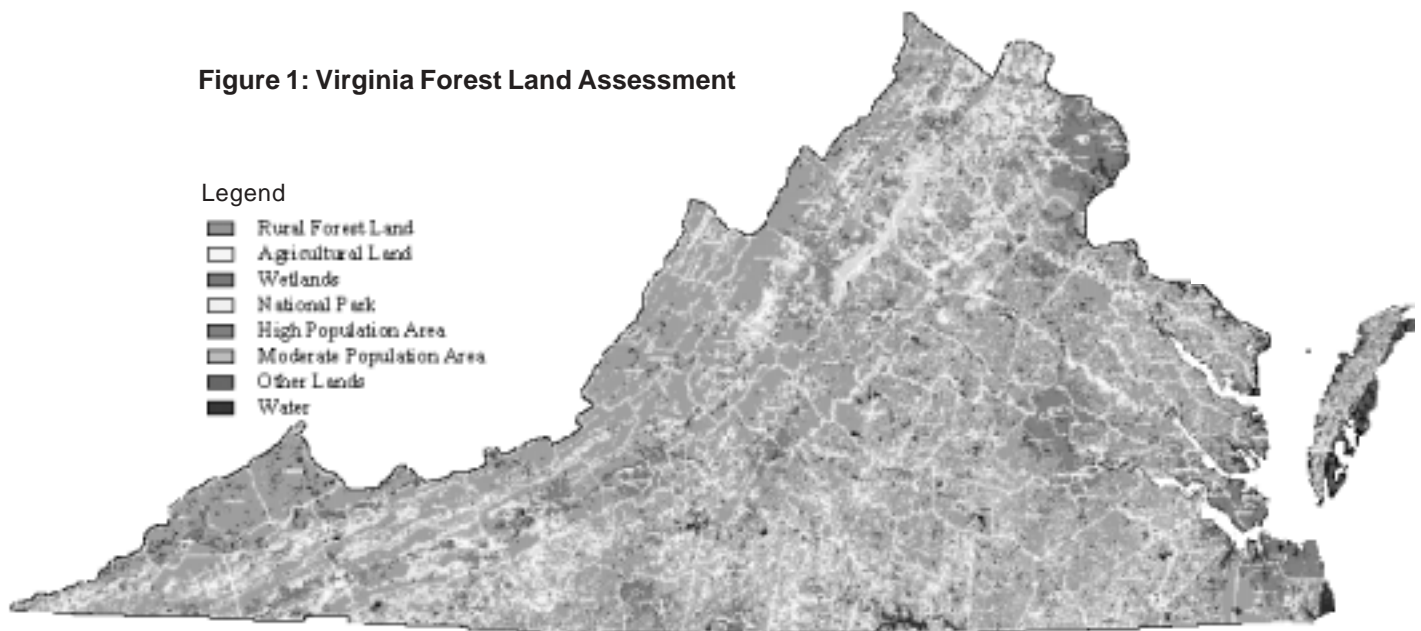
Table 1 shows the distribution by types and amounts of land cover, adjusted for state agency current statistics. Figure 1 (DNH Land Cover Map) shows the distribution of these cover types throughout the state.

**Table 1: Draft Land Cover Assessment Statistics**

Land Cover Type	Land Cover Area (Millions of Acres)	Percent of Land Cover
Forest	15.9	61.83
Agriculture	8.3	29.90
Urban	1.64	6.49
Wetland	0.26	1.03
Barren	0.15	0.59
Grasslands	0.04	0.16
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>25.27</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** Department of Conservation and Recreation and Department of Forestry, *Open Space Preservation and Land Conservation in Virginia*, April 17, 2002.

**Figure 1: Virginia Forest Land Assessment**



**Source:** Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Forestry

## **A Landscape at Risk**

While it may initially appear that a great deal of the Commonwealth's land may still be classified as "open space," a look at the condition of these resources does indeed portray a landscape at risk.

### **Forest Lands Indicators**

- Virginia has 15.9 million acres of forestland representing 62% of the land cover. Forest-related products are Virginia's #1 manufacturing industry.
- Only 2.8 million acres, just 11% of the Virginia land area, are assured of remaining forestland for the long term: 2,562,610 acres of forestland are publicly owned by federal, state and local agencies and an additional 236,443 acres are under conservation/ open space easements.
- Seventy-seven per cent, or approximately 13.6 million acres, of Virginia's forestland is in private ownership. However, since 1995 several large landholding industries have sold their lands and others are considering similar actions. 10.3 million acres of forestland owned by individuals and farmers are also under pressure from suburban development.
- Of the lands owned by private individuals, farmers and the forest industry, only 8.5 million acres are likely to remain available for timber production, which is not adequate to support the current rate of harvest on a long term, sustainable basis.
- The Virginia Department of Forestry recommends acquisition of an additional state forest lands spanning 92,000 acres in 26 counties at an estimated cost of \$87.2 million

### **Agricultural Land Indicators**

- Agricultural land cover accounts for more than 30% of the land base in Virginia with 8.3 farm acreage in 2000. Almost four million acres of land owned by farmers also contains valuable forest resources and wildlife habitat
- Agriculture is the second leading industry in the Commonwealth, generating 11.2% of the Total Gross Product in Virginia. Livestock and livestock products (including poultry) account for about 68 percent of all agricultural commodities. Fresh market produce is a growing market niche; Virginia ranks fourth in fresh tomatoes and sixth for summer and sweet potatoes, tobacco and peanut production.
- There are approximately 49,000 farms in the state, averaging 180 acres in size. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) has recognized 668 Century Farms, honoring farms, which have been in continuous production by the same family for over 100 years



- Between 1992 and 1997, 105,000 acres of prime farmland were lost to development; and the loss of prime agricultural land in Virginia increased 76 percent in the last five years
- The current estimated annual rate of conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses is 26,000 acres of prime soil and a total of 49,000 acres of all farmland. Purchase of Development rights on just 2% of the state's farmland (about 170,000 acres) would cost over \$100 million (assuming a price of 30% of the land's fair market value)

### **Natural Heritage Indicators**

- The Commonwealth of Virginia ranks in the top 10 among all states in globally rare plants and animals. But of the 425 globally significant conservation sites identified in Virginia, 61% are unprotected. The lowlands along the Northwest and North Landing Rivers support a half dozen globally rare wetland communities. In historic times, at least 26 vertebrae and mussel species have been lost in Virginia.
- The Virginia Natural Area Preserves system encompasses 36 dedicated natural areas totaling 27,899 acres. The DCR Natural Heritage Program has also identified more than 1600 "conservation sites," encompassing 1,030,755 acres, and over 200 "stream conservation units" as being worthy of protection.
- The southern Blue Ridge mountain region supports the globally rare Fraser fir, the federally endangered Virginia northern flying squirrel and mafic wetlands harboring 24 state-rare plants and animals. The southeastern corner of the state features Virginia's few remaining long-leaf pine stands and a pine woodland with the Commonwealth's only population of the federally endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker. The vast Dismal Swamp is home to dozens of state-rare plants and a colorful assortment of rare butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies.

### **Historic Resources Indicators**

- The Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places contains more than 2000 individual listings; The Virginia Board of Historic Resources holds historic preservation easements on more than 300 of these sites.
- Twelve of the listings are Rural Historic Districts, established for the protection of a "geographic area that has historically been used by people, or shaped and modified by human activity, occupancy or intervention, and possess a significant concentration, linkage or continuity of areas of land use, vegetation, buildings and structures, roads and waterways, and natural features". Rural Historic Districts range in size from the 1,092 acres in Powhatan Rural Historic District to Madison-Barbour Rural Historic District's 31,200 acres.

- The Landmark Register sites, including Jamestown, Williamsburg, Monticello, Montpelier, and Appomattox Court House constitute a primer of American history. But, on a larger scale, our *cultural landscape* is largely unprotected. The best example of a cultural landscape is the Shenandoah Valley, with its small 19<sup>th</sup> century towns still separated by expanses of open fields with unobstructed views of the two mountain ranges that define the “Great Valley of Virginia.”
- The Shenandoah Valley Battlefield National Historic District encompasses seven counties and 10 battlefields. Protecting these and other Revolutionary and Civil War battlefields will likely cost more than \$1 billion.

### **Parks, Recreation and Open Space Indicators**

- Virginia’s 34 state parks encompass \_\_\_\_\_ acres of natural, cultural and recreational resources. The Virginia state park system is the 2001-2003 National Gold Medal award winner for excellence in park and recreation management.
- The 2002 State Parks and Natural Areas Bond Referendum, approved by 69% of the voters, will provide \$ 30 million for the acquisition of three new state parks and expansion of 11 other state parks. The Natural Area Preserves system will be augmented with the acquisition of 10 new Natural Area Preserves and additions to eight others. However, these additional public lands will still not overcome the current deficit of 8,339 acres of state park lands needed to meet current recreation demands
- State Parks return more than \$38 million annually to the general fund and are a lynch pin of Virginia’s \$13 billion tourism industry. Top destinations are historic and cultural sites and scenic areas. More than 7 million people visited state parks in 2002, almost 40% from out of state, and visitors contributed \$144 million to the state and local economies. In 2001 state residents and nonresidents spent \$1.9 billion on wildlife recreation.
- Virginia is one of only three states on the eastern seaboard that does not have a dedicated source of funding for land conservation. The potential loss in matching funds from federal, local and private sources is estimated to be over \$200 million annually.

### **Environmental Quality Indicators**

- Although clean air and clean water are constitutionally guaranteed rights for Virginians (Article XI), seventy-six percent (76%) of the estuaries of the Chesapeake Bay and tidal rivers are polluted.



- Over 4400 miles of Virginia's rivers are degraded and 42% of the state's wetlands have been destroyed since John Smith first set foot on Virginia's shores.
- A 2002 Chesapeake Bay Program/Virginia Tech survey found that nearly 90 percent of the Chesapeake Bay watershed residents are concerned about the health of the Bay and its rivers and streams.
- There are no funds for the Water Quality Improvement Fund, which is critical to nutrient and sediment reduction projects throughout the state.



### III: MEETING OUR COMMITMENT

*Our aspirations are our possibilities.*

- Samuel Johnson

#### Making Progress

Today, through public and private sector efforts, over three million acres, or 12% of the estimated total land cover (25.27 million acres including urban areas,) is “currently protected.” Table 2 shows the amount of public lands administered by governmental agencies at the federal, state and local level and privately owned lands protected by conservation organizations either through fee simple acquisition or through donation of conservation easements to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation or other statewide or local land trusts.

**Table 2: Protected Lands in Virginia 2000**

Group Holding Property or Easement	Amount of Land Conserved (Acres)	Percentage Represented By Holdings
Federal	2,360,813	77.16
State (including VOF)	553,000	18.06
Local	99,311	3.24
Private	65,368	2.14
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>3,059,758</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Chesapeake Bay Watershed	2,233,048	

#### Virginia Land Conservation Foundation

In 1999 the General Assembly, upon recommendation of the Commission on the Future of Virginia’s Environment, created the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLCF) to more effectively focus land conservation efforts in the state. VLCF was given statutory authority (§10.1-1021) to:

- Provide matching grants for the acquisition of fee simple or other interests in land “for the protection and preservation of ecological, cultural or historic resources, lands for threatened or endangered species, fish and wildlife habitat, natural areas, agricultural and forest production and lands for recreational purposes
- Prepare a comprehensive plan that seeks to implement all the purposes for which it was created, and
- Identify and implement an integrated network of open space for the protection of significant natural and cultural resources.

The \$10.5 million appropriated for VLCF grants between 1999 and 2001 has been leveraged to protect an estimated 9,127 acres of farms and forests, natural areas, battlefields and other historic sites and public parklands. Virginia's strong array of land conservation tax credits, established during this same timeframe, has also been a powerful incentive for voluntary land protection. Nevertheless, the VLCF has identified needs of \$80 million per year in the foreseeable future for protection of farmland, forest, open space parks, natural areas, wildlife areas and historic lands.

### **Virginia's Land Trusts: Community and Linkages**

Paralleling the history of Virginia's People and its legacy of land are two deeply rooted traditions: private land stewardship and a reverence for private property rights. The land-trust movement in Virginia, as elsewhere across the nation, is grounded in these two traditions. Although land trusts have been a vital part of the conservation movement in other parts of the nation for over a century, the mechanism for ensuring the permanent protection of significant natural and cultural resources on private property was not available in Virginia until 1966, when the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) was established and authorized to hold conservation easements under the Virginia Open Space Lands Act (§10.1-1700-1705). The VOF is the Commonwealth's statewide public land trust, governed by a Board of Trustees appointed by the Governor and funded by General Assembly appropriations. The VOF also administers the Open-Space Preservation Trust Fund for the purpose of providing grants to localities for acquiring open-space easements or to persons conveying easements on agricultural, forestal or other open-space land.

Passage of the Virginia Conservation Easement Act in 1975 authorized other private non-profit organizations to acquire conservation easements by gift, purchase, devise or bequest. The way was thus opened for the establishment of regional and local land trusts in the Commonwealth.

For the past quarter century land trusts have been working, for the most part quietly and behind the scenes, to protect the Commonwealth's significant natural and cultural resources.

Today there are 29 private land conservation organizations operating in the Commonwealth of Virginia with varying resources, capacity and focus. More than 60 percent have been established within the last 15 years. Virginia's United Land Trusts (VaULT) was established in November 2000, with funding assistance from the Virginia Environmental Endowment, for the purpose of fostering closer coordination and communication

between land trusts, building land trust capacity, promoting high professional standards and supporting statewide land conservation efforts. The emergence of private non-profit land trusts as leaders in the conservation of Virginia's common wealth is consistent with the rise of the land trust movement nationwide.

Virginia is a national leader in the number of conservation easements held by public and private land trusts, and 81% of the acres permanently protected in the Commonwealth in the past ten years have come through private donations of land and easements. To date over 213,000 acres have been permanently protected through voluntary land stewardship actions by Virginia landowners.

It is noteworthy that approximately 36,000 of the acres protected by state agencies was added in 2002 through donations of conservation easements to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation - a strong indicator that Virginia's outstanding array of conservation tax credits are a powerful incentive for voluntary land protection. It is also clear, however, that these efforts notwithstanding, existing tools for land conservation are inadequate to reach the 2000 Chesapeake Bay Agreement, or even keep pace with the losses of land resources. The land-trust community in Virginia, in cooperation with national and state public and private partners has begun to marshal its resources to meet these challenges.

### **Coming Together: Visioning the Future of Virginia's Environment**

In its first year VaULT joined forces with two key state natural resources agencies to broaden the base for collaborative land conservation. In order to complete the Assessment of Need required for participation in the federal Forest Legacy program, the Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) conducted a public input process in 2000. The comments gathered during that process provided another strong impetus for a comprehensive statewide land conservation strategic plan. Summarizing the findings of seven public hearings, DOF's final reporting September 2000 noted:

*"Over and above all other suggestions and concerns was the strong message that conservation easement organizations need to find a way to coordinate and collaborate in their efforts."*

Following up on the Forest Legacy public input, the Virginia Department of Forestry and VaULT, with assistance from the University of Virginia's Institute for Environmental Negotiation, cosponsored a conference in June 2001 to bring together public and private easement-holding organizations operating in Virginia. More than 100 participants - representing a broad range of public and private land conservation interests throughout the Commonwealth - attended the Visioning the Future of Virginia's Environment conference in Charlottesville. Legislative leaders, including the Speaker of the House of

Delegates and the Chairman of the Chesapeake Bay Commission spoke to the challenge of conserving land and conferees responded by identifying specific needs and recommendations for effective land conservation efforts. Four recurring themes emerged during conference discussions:

- ***Funding for Land Conservation Programs*** was seen as the “linchpin” that is urgently needed to enable other things to happen, both in the private land trusts and state and local government entities.
- ***Enhanced Information Management*** is needed to improve data collection and increase technical capacities were identified as another top priority. Completion of a comprehensive GIS-mapping of conserved lands and significant natural, cultural, agricultural and forestal land and environmentally sensitive areas is a clear need, as is the establishment of a central clearinghouse of land conservation information for landowners, conservation organizations, private citizens, legislators and government officials.
- ***New Partnerships for Multiple Purposes***, including sharing of technical information capacity between public and private organizations and for educating landowners, citizens, legislators and government officials.
- ***Planning*** was a major theme throughout the conference, with a focus on development of a statewide conservation plan that would establish statewide and regional priorities and facilitate funding of these priorities.

In October 2001, the Virginia Department of Forestry, with funding from the U.S. Forest Service Chesapeake Bay Office, awarded a contract to VaULT for the development of the recommended statewide strategic plan for land conservation. In December 2001, the Department of Conservation and Recreation established the Office of Land Conservation to serve as the information clearinghouse; and a DCR-VaULT Memorandum of Agreement was signed to further support collaborative efforts.

### **VaULT's *Linking Lands* Project**

With assistance from the Department of Forestry and the Department of Conservation, Virginia's United Land Trusts presented six regional workshops in May-June 2002 to lay the foundation for the statewide plan and identify regional priorities for land conservation. The workshop results are summarized in the following chapter and presented in detail in Part II of this report.

## IV. LINKING LANDS: BUILDING A FOUNDATION

*Show me a healthy community with a healthy environment and  
I will show you a community that has its Green infrastructure in order  
and understands the relationship between the built and unbuilt environments.*  
- Will Rogers, President, Trust for Public Lands

The *Linking Lands* Workshops conducted in Spring 2002 continued the collaborative planning efforts initiated by the 2001 *Visioning the Future of Virginia's Environment* conference. Six regional workshops brought together community, conservation, industry and government leaders to:

- Assess the current status of land conservation within the region
- Identify regional opportunities, priorities and strategies for land conservation actions and the linkages between local, regional and statewide initiatives, including recommendations of the 2002 Virginia Outdoors Plan
- Facilitate regional collaboration between public and private sector agencies, organizations and decision makers, and
- Enhance the effectiveness of local and regional land conservation through shared resources and technical expertise

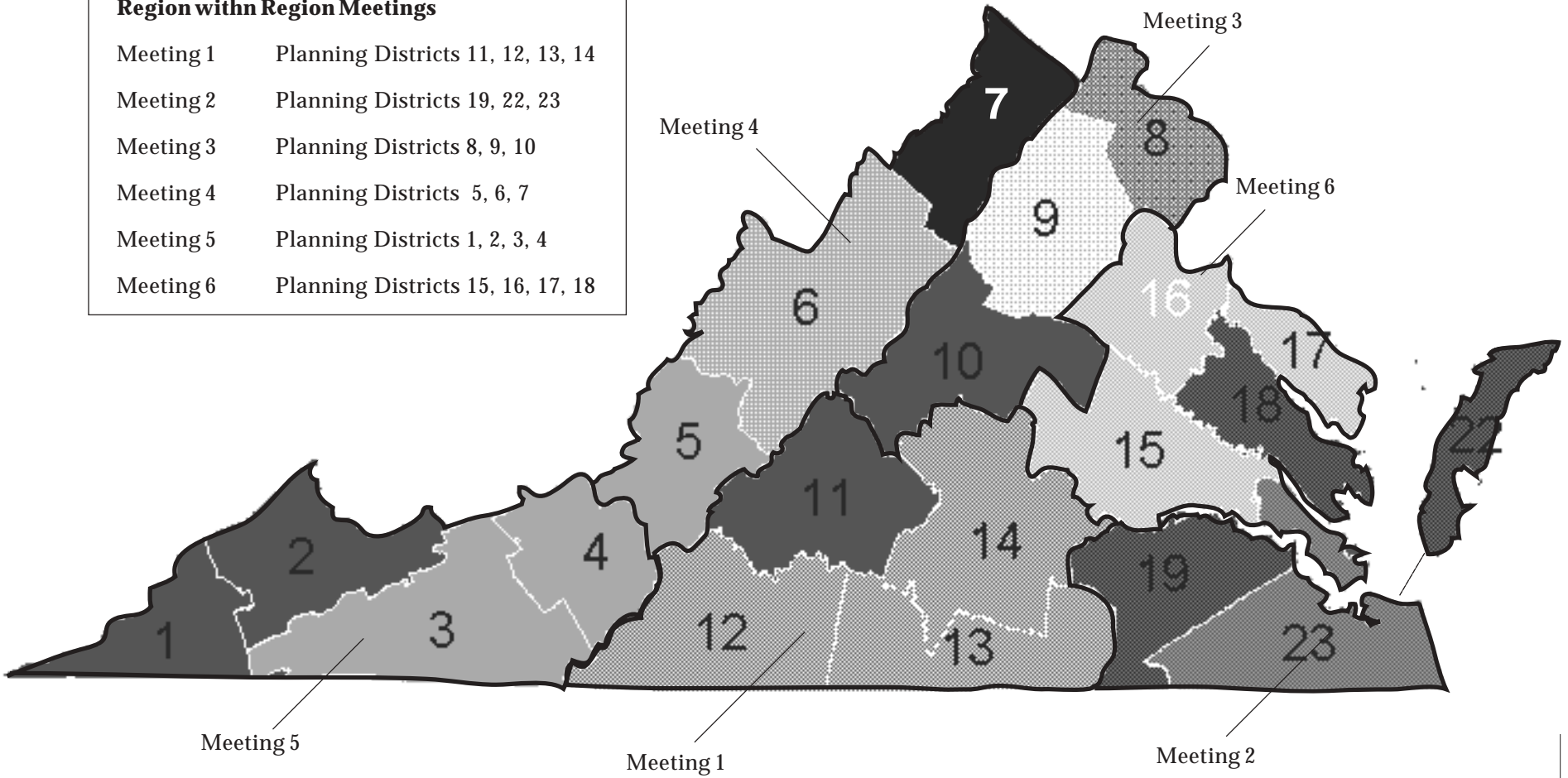
The workshops were a joint effort of Virginia's United Land Trusts, Department of Forestry and Department of Conservation and Recreation. The technical, manpower and funding resources provided by the Department of Forestry and Department of Conservation and Recreation were invaluable to this strategic planning process; Additionally, VaULT's Conservation Partners also included the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Scenic Virginia and the Preservation Alliance of Virginia. Additionally, representatives of the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation attended every workshop and provided valuable input.

For planning purposes, the meeting regions were delineated by Planning District/Regional Commission boundaries, watersheds and ecoregion (see Figure 2). Workshops were presented at Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center in Appomattox, Hampton Roads Planning District Commission in Chesapeake, Lord Fairfax Community College in Warrenton, Virginia Mennonite Retirement Center in Harrisonburg, Hungry Mother State Park in Marion and Salem Church Library in Fredericksburg.

A total of 145 participants attended the six regional workshops, an average of 24 participants per workshop. Generally speaking, representatives of conservation organizations and government agencies outnumbered private landowners and business representatives.

**Land Conservation Trust Plan  
Region withn Region Meetings**

Meeting 1	Planning Districts 11, 12, 13, 14
Meeting 2	Planning Districts 19, 22, 23
Meeting 3	Planning Districts 8, 9, 10
Meeting 4	Planning Districts 5, 6, 7
Meeting 5	Planning Districts 1, 2, 3, 4
Meeting 6	Planning Districts 15, 16, 17, 18





## Setting Priorities

The six Linking Lands Regional Workshops produced specific measurable results in the form of:

- Prioritized recommendations for regional and local land conservation actions by land trusts and/or public agencies. These recommendations will provide a “ground-truthed regional database layer for building Virginia’s Green Infrastructure. They will also assist land trusts in setting their own organization’s land protection priorities.
- Initiation of collaborative alliances between private land conservation organizations and between land trusts and public agencies to more effectively plan and implement land conservation actions.

Using regional information, including recommendations of the **2002 Virginia Outdoors Plan**, a picture of statewide priorities emerged, making it possible to link local, regional and statewide initiatives to prepare comprehensive strategies for land conservation actions. These recommendations provide a “ground-truthed” regional database layer upon which to build Virginia’s green infrastructure; they will also assist land trusts in setting their own organizations’ land protection priorities. Following is a brief description of the priority resources identified by workshop participants. A complete listing of the priorities is contained in Part II of this report.

### 1. Natural Areas

Protection of Virginia’s extraordinary wealth of globally, nationally and regionally significant natural areas ranked highest among all priorities identified by workshop participants, garnering almost twice the votes of the next highest priority. Workshop participants were unanimously supportive of DCR’s Natural Heritage Program, giving significant voice to the need to fund and protect these resources. Other priorities included:

- Protect large undeveloped tracts of natural lands to retain biological diversity and character of their regions.
- Obtain additional easements to buffer existing natural areas such as Shenandoah National Park, George Washington Forest, a new natural area on Bull Run Mountain in PDC 8 and the Rappahannock River Valley Wildlife Refuge in PDCs 17 and 18.
- Protection of watersheds and broad areas of natural significance including Piney Creek/ Big Springs Bogs area in PDC 3, Southwest Mountains in Albemarle County in PDC 10, Portions of Quantico and AP Hill Military Bases in PDC 16,

Dragon Run watershed in PDC 18, the southern tip of the Eastern Shore in PDC 22, and preservation of rare and unusual forests and no net loss of tidal and non-tidal wetlands in PDC 23

- Participants also identified a number of private lands for which they sought acquisition or land conservation protection to minimize any impacts on the resources.

## **2. Farms and Forests**

In all of the regions the protection and retention of private agricultural and forested lands were considered important. In all but the most urbanized areas they were among the top priorities. Many participants saw these lands as integral to the character of their community. They were not satisfied with the prospect that the farms and forests would become museum pieces, but sought to identify ways and means to make them economically viable components of their communities. Some proponents of the forested lands envisioned a statewide commitment to sustainable forest practices for both public and private forested lands. For obvious reasons the participants were reluctant to identify specific farms for preservation, but they frequently did identify agricultural areas where agricultural and forestal conservation measures should be implemented. These included:

- The Thompson Valley, Burke's Garden and Elk Garden Areas of PDC 1
- Agricultural lands along Dry Run, Route 252 and Point Republic in PDC 6
- Farmland protection along the Route 340 corridor in Page County PDC 7
- South Fauquier Area including conservation of agricultural areas along Route 28 corridor in PDC 9
- Large farms adjacent to the Rapidan in Greene/Madison/Orange Counties in PDC 10
- The North and Central Halifax River Road area in PDCs 12 and 13

## **3. Water Corridors: Greenways, Blueways, Riparian Buffers, Scenic Rivers**

From the perspective of the private land trusts, acquiring easements and other land conservation practices engenders significant value along the waterways of the state. The critical need to protect and improve the Commonwealth's water quality and supply was consistently cited as a high priority. The cost effectiveness of riparian land conservation versus high technology water treatment facilities, and the consequent impact on municipal cost of public services was frequently cited as an important protection rationale. Additionally, these corridors encompass an ecological, historical, and recreational resource that are an integral part of the experiential value of the rivers and streams that course through the Virginia landscape. In some cases participants were intent on conserving the resources that are integral to the character of their community as well as

recovering biological health of rivers and providing essential public services. Others sought scenic designation for river corridors to encourage their protection, attract recognition of their scenic value and provide buffering to enhance the recreational experience of hikers, canoeists, cyclists, boaters and equestrians. Priority projects for these resources include:

- PDC 8 ranked the protection of the Potomac River, Goose Creek and smaller stream valleys as their first three priorities.
- PDC 23 gave high priority to conserving waterways in that region.

Throughout the state major rivers were identified as in need of conservation measures to protect water quality and the health of adjacent riparian lands including:

- The Roanoke River in PDC 5;
- Overall Run Wildlife Corridor at the Page and Warren County Line in PDC 7;
- The Rappahannock River in PDCs 9 and 18;
- The Rock Fish River Valley, the South Fork of Rivanna River and the Main Rivanna River in PDC 10
- The James River Corridor in PDC 10 and 14
- The Mattaponi River in PDC 16
- Cat Point Creek and the Corrotoman River in PDC 17
- The Piankatank to Bay Corridor in PDC 18

## **4. Parks and Trails**

### ***Parks***

Workshop participants frequently mentioned the value of public parklands—not only as repositories for important natural and cultural resources, but also as places to provide environmental education and outdoor recreation opportunities such as camping, boating, fishing, swimming, hiking, sports and general active play. Land trust roles associated with local, regional, state and national parks usually focused on buffering the natural park areas to avoid conflicts between the management of parkland resources and adjacent development. Priorities included:

- PDC 8 ranked buffering the Regional Parks and providing trail access to parks as their number one priority.
- PDCs 17 and 18 gave priority to establishing a new state park in their Districts,
- PDCs 22 and 23 emphasized the general need for more park and recreation facilities in their respective Districts.

### ***Trails***

The emphasis on trails related mostly to the longer state or region-wide trails such as the Appalachian Trail in PDCs 3 and 4, the Potomac National Heritage Scenic Trail in PDC 8 and The New River Trail and Blueway in PDC 4. Conservation activities were primarily focused on the acquisition of easements to preserve scenic views and reduce developmental encroachment along the trails. In some specific situations efforts are needed to complete trail rights-of-ways such as:

- The rails-to-trails project between Lawrenceville and Lacrosse in PDC 12 and 13
- Links to Manassas Gap, Crooked Run Valley, Gap Run Valley, Fleetwood and Avoka State Forests, and Sky Meadows State Park in PDC 9.
- Participants urged priority consideration for trails connecting larger natural areas or parks in order to create a network of trails that would allow for touring and return to point of origin.

## **5. Scenic Resources**

Participants focused on three varied aspects of the scenic highways and byways. First was the need to designate existing roadways as scenic and protect the travel corridors for their scenic value. Virginia Byway designation was sought for:

- Routes 340 in PDC 7
- Routes 15 and 230 in PDC 9
- Route 711 in PDC 15

Second was an interest in obtaining easements and using other conservation practices to protect scenic vistas. Projects include:

- The Blue Ridge Parkway corridor
- Selected areas of Route 29 in PDC 5, 10 and 12
- Interstate 81 in PDC 4 and 5

Third was the protection of the roads from additional development that would significantly change their character and add to sprawl in the communities. Projects receiving priority in this area included:

- The I-81 & 460 corridors in PDC 4
- The Route 13 corridor in PDC 22

## **6. Historic Resources**

As with the natural areas, workshop participants consistently identified significant historic places, events, personages, landscapes and archeological sites as being important to protect from loss to the community. Efforts were envisioned where the land trusts would use conservation measures to buffer the existing historical properties as well as recognizing the need to set aside additional properties that are currently unprotected. Projects identified include:

- Battlefield preservation including conservation of Valley Battlefields in PDC 6, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Winchester Battle including Redbud Run, US route 11 north of Winchester and Millburn Road Historic District in PDC 7
- The Dinwiddie Quarry Battlefield in PDC 15
- The Fredericksburg Area Battlefields in PDC16

Other historic resources that received priority for protection included the Madison-Barbour Historic District in PDC 8, the Monacan Indian Lands and the lands around Curtis Community in PDC 11, and the Hopyard in PDC 16.

## **7. Other Priorities**

- PDCs 11, 14 and 17 gave priority to using conservation and planning measures to reduce the amount of sprawl development in their Districts.
- DC 15 participants expressed concern about the threats more prison development might do to the Route 522 Corridor.



## V: VIRGINIA'S UNITED LAND TRUSTS

### STRATEGIES and ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

*That land is a community is a basic concept of ecology;  
But that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics;  
That land yields a cultural harvest is a fact long known, but latterly forgotten.*  
- Aldo Leopold

#### Strategies and Action Recommendations

When Virginia's United Land Trusts set out to develop a strategic plan for achieving the Commonwealth's statewide land conservation goals, it did so with the support and encouragement of our conservation partners in state and local government agencies as well as land trusts operating at national, state and local levels. The recommended strategies, therefore, reach beyond the private land trust community to embrace the unique strengths and capabilities of both the private and public sectors. These strategies represent a consensus of what resources are needed to achieve the land conservation goals to which the land trust community is committed.

The Strategies are grounded in three basic premises:

1. Land conservation practices are consistent with economic stability goals and are integral to ensuring the kinds of communities in which all Virginians wish to live, work and play.
2. Existing land conservation tools and practices and State statutes and local planning and zoning processes –when effectively applied – provide a significant opportunity to conserve and protect important natural, historical and recreational resources.
3. Adequate funding in support of land conservation goals will be required for success; and it is clear that the funding will generate additional dollars in value for the dollars invested. Funding from various public sources can be leveraged to a significant degree by providing a stimulus to private entrepreneurial sources.

Five interrelated strategies are proposed, with accompanying action recommendations for legislators, state and local government agencies, and private conservation organizations.

These strategies address:

- Establishing a Virginia Land Conservation System that will synthesize and coordinate conservation priorities and actions at the state, regional and local levels
- Educating the Stakeholders about conservation options and the economic benefits of land conservation
- Strengthening the capacity of land trusts
- Creating Partnerships
- Fundng

## **Strategy A. Build a Virginia Land Conservation System**

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There is currently no widely available, systematic method or protocol for determining where the available resources should be focused or distributed. A Virginia Land Conservation System (VLCS) would identify priorities and provide opportunities for land trusts and other conservation partners to use their resources in the most efficient ways. Such a statewide framework for land conservation would also enable the Commonwealth to allocate its fiscal resources most effectively and to maximize coordination and shared priorities while empowering and supporting regional and local leaders to work toward their own goals as well as the statewide system goals.

The framework and goals for a Virginia Land Conservation System can encompass a variety of related statewide needs including ecological health, heritage resources and community preservation. Contained within this framework are a variety of economic, cultural, historical, entrepreneurial, and ecological goals aimed at sustaining the character of communities and enhancing the quality of life for all citizens. At a minimum the framework and goals should include the following:

1. Encompass all natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources and their functional roles whether it is for biological research, protection of water quality or commercial uses;
2. Allow for participation by all entities within the spectrum of interested parties. This would include public, private, non-profit and individuals at all levels; and
3. Focus all resources made available for this initiative toward an explicit set of priorities that are set forth in the land conservation system.

The proposed three-tiered framework for a Virginia Land Conservation System is designed to maximize the resources and implementation capabilities found at the state, regional and community levels. The planning tools and concepts are described below.

### **► Green Infrastructure (Statewide Level)**

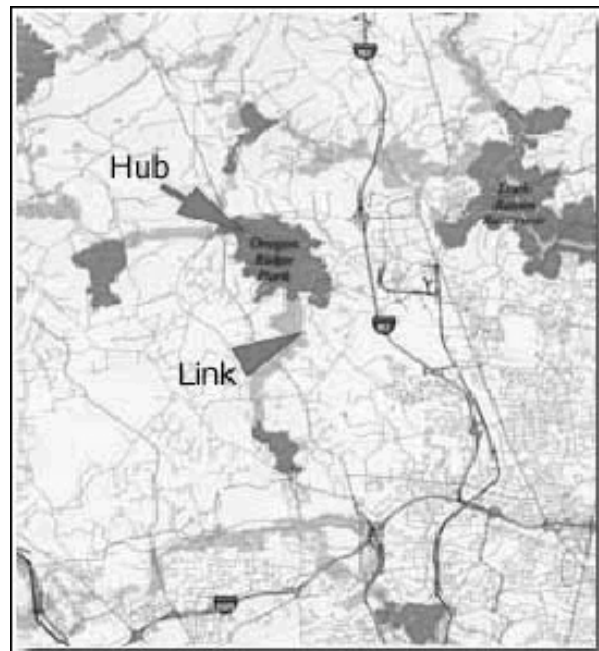
**Green Infrastructure** planning is the foundation of a Virginia Land Conservation System, underlying and scalable to state, regional, and local conservation efforts. It is “a strategically planned and managed network of wilderness, parks, greenways, conservation easements, and working lands with conservation value that supports native species, maintains natural ecological processes, sustains air and water resources, and contributes to the health and quality of life for Virginia’s communities and people.”



The **Green Infrastructure** network encompasses a wide range of landscape elements including: natural areas - such as wetlands, woodlands, waterways, and wildlife habitat; forests, farms, and ranches. It also incorporates outdoor recreation and trail networks. (All of these elements were identified as priorities at the VaULT Linking Lands Regional Workshops.)

The concept of **Green Infrastructure** elevates air, land, and water to an equal footing with built infrastructure (roads, utilities, schools, etc.) and transforms open space from “nice to have” to “must have.” At the same time, green infrastructure helps frame the most efficient location for development and growth - and related gray infrastructure - ensuring that developers, citizens, and communities capture the cost advantages of location and create and protect household and community amenities.

Typically, a Green Infrastructure system is comprised of “**Hubs and Corridors.**” *Hubs* are large areas— hundreds or thousands of acres in size – that are vital to maintaining the state’s ecology. They serve to prevent the shrinking and fragmentation of undeveloped open space and maximize the ecological potential of Virginia’s landscape. Since the state and federal public lands (state parks and forests and national parks and forests) constitute the majority of conserved lands in Virginia, they are obvious “hub” elements; but hubs may also be comprised of a mixture of public and private conserved lands, such as The Nature Conservancy’s “portfolio sites.” Large regional parks may also constitute hubs, particularly in urban areas. *Corridors* provide protection for the movement of wildlife and plant life across the landscape (ecological corridors), recreational access for rural and urban populations (trails,) and enhancement or restoration of water quality (riparian corridors.)



**Green Hubs and Green Links**

In 1999 **The Green Infrastructure Working Group**, representing public and private interests at all levels, developed guiding principles to enable planners to integrate Green Infrastructure into planning strategies. Recommendations for implementing Green Infrastructure planning are based on these guiding principles:

1. Embrace Green Infrastructure as the framework for conservation.
2. Finance the protection and management of green infrastructure as a primary public investment
3. Design a green infrastructure system that functions across multiple landscapes and scales and is grounded in scientific and land planning theories and practices
4. Understanding that linkage is the key
5. Design and plan green infrastructure before development
6. Design a green infrastructure system that functions across multiple landscapes and scales.
7. Provide an open forum to engage key personnel and create a shared green infrastructure vision that excites people with diverse backgrounds and interests
8. Engage the public in developing a green infrastructure plan that stimulates action by all participants
9. Document and promote the diverse benefits of Green Infrastructure

The technical capability for delineating the statewide Green Infrastructure is currently available within state agencies and the land trust community. Existing planning tools include:

- ***Natural Heritage Plan***, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage. Formerly titled Virginia's Precious Heritage, the Natural Heritage Plan presents methodologies of the Natural Heritage Program, discusses the current status of natural heritage resource conservation and sets the natural heritage inventory, protection and stewardship priorities for the state. Conservation targets are set for each physiographic region.
- ***The Conservation Lands Data Base*** (CLDB), Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Heritage Program. This data base is comprised of spatial data on the conserved lands of the Commonwealth, including most federal and state lands, regional and interstate lands such as water and park authorities, parks and undeveloped or partially-developed lands owned by localities, lands owned as preserves by non-profit conservation organizations, and conservation easements held by the Virginia Outdoors foundation, land trusts and others. The database also includes historic sites and recommendations from each VOP Regional Analysis. It is the baseline for identifying an integrated network of open space throughout the Commonwealth.

- ***Virginia Conservation Lands Assessment (VCLA)***, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Natural Heritage Program. This powerful planning tool is currently being developed under a grant from the Department of Environmental Quality's Virginia Coastal Program. Patterned on Maryland's Green Infrastructure/GreenPrint program, the VCLA is based on land cover data derived from 2000 satellite imagery. The major focus is on identifying and prioritizing natural lands and corridors necessary to protect and enhance them. The Virginia Conservation Lands Assessment is a critical first step in the process of elaborating a detailed Green Infrastructure for Virginia. VCLA components will include: an atlas with maps showing priority hubs and corridors in the context of existing protected lands; a *catalog* of hubs and corridors identifying the specific values that determine their priority and vulnerability; a *GIS model* with detailed metadata explaining/justifying variables and data used and weights assigned; and *GIS layers* identifying hubs and corridors, and additional overlays assessing ecological values and vulnerability. VCLA provides three distinct levels of analyses for prioritizing land conservation decisions:

- *Ecological* - which are the most important lands based on considerations of biological and ecological value and integrity? Corridors connecting these lands are also designed from the perspective of ecological value. This analysis is designed as objectively as possible, with input from a variety of knowledgeable biologists and planners. The coverage resulting from this analysis will be fundamental for all further analyses.
- *Vulnerability* - which conservation lands are most at-risk from loss or degradation as a result of various kinds of development? This analysis will focus on proximity to roads, urban areas, and jobs, and will take into consideration what protections are offered by existing locality planning, agricultural and forestal districts and other voluntary land conservation programs.
- *Specific Local and Regional Interests* - These may include a) local/regional concerns related to local planning issues or identified conservation or tourism values or b) problem-specific interpretation such as water quality, outdoor recreation or forestry. For instance, a locality or land trust may want to focus on local planning concerns or opportunities; or an agency or organization concerned with water quality conservation lands.

The first products, encompassing the counties east of the Fall Line to the Atlantic Ocean are expected to be completed by Fall 2003. Funding is not currently available to expand the VCLA to cover the entire state.

- **Forest Legacy Program**, Virginia Department of Forestry/U.S. Forest Service. Pursuant to requirements of the U.S. Forest Service *Forest Legacy Program*, the Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) developed an “Assessment of Need” which identifies and delineates boundaries of forest areas meeting the eligibility requirements for designation as Forest Legacy Areas. The DOF established Forest Legacy Areas by identifying areas that contain environmentally important forests, and where those forests are most threatened by conversion to non-forest uses. Environmentally important forests may offer important geological features, mineral resources, wildlife habitat including threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, recreational resources, timber management, and aesthetic and scenic values. While the entire state of Virginia has been designated as a Forest Legacy Area for funding purposes, the criteria developed by DOF to ascertain conservation values and population pressures provides strategic guidance for setting priorities for land conservation at local as well as statewide levels.
- **2002 Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP)**, Department of Conservation and Recreation. *The Virginia Outdoors Plan* has long been recognized as the state’s primary reference for identifying roles and responsibilities of public land management agencies and priorities for statewide, regional and local recreational development needs. The VOP identifies priorities for the acquisition and development public parklands, designation of Scenic Rivers and Virginia Byways, Greenways and Blueways and other outdoor recreation and resource protection actions. It serves as the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and provides the baseline criteria for awarding of federal Land and Water Conservation Fund monies to state and local government agencies. A major new focus of the 2002 VOP is its emphasis on conservation of land and open space as one of the most critical issues facing Virginia. Expanded information on private land conservation tools and “green infrastructure” planning provides further strong support for the VaULT Linking Lands Project.
- **Wildlife Conservation Plan**, Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. To be completed by 2005, this comprehensive plan will include the identification of species, habitats and biotic communities in greatest need of conservation, and will prioritize actions to monitor and conserve them. The intent of the plan is to prevent more species from becoming endangered and to maintain diverse natural landscapes for citizens and wildlife. It is being developed pursuant to the federal Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Act and other federal requirements for receipt of federal State Wildlife Grants. The planning effort takes a broad landscape level, statewide coordinated approach to species and habitat conservation and will support local and regional conservation efforts.

- **Ecoregion Planning, The Nature Conservancy.** This science-based tool is how The Nature Conservancy sets its' conservation priorities. The results can be shared with other land trusts and public sector partners who are endeavoring to preserve the Earth's biodiversity.

As the first step in its conservation process, The Nature Conservancy designs "portfolios" of conservation areas within and across ecoregions. Ecoregions are relatively large geographic areas of land and water delineated by climate, vegetation, geology and other ecological and environmental patterns. There are over 60 Ecoregions in the United States, and seven of these are represented in Virginia. Ecoregion portfolios represent the full distribution and diversity of native species, natural communities and ecological systems within each region. Designing ecoregion-based portfolios is a complex, iterative process built around five steps:

- Identifying the species, communities and ecological systems within an ecoregion;
- Setting specific goals for the number and distribution of these conservation targets to be captured in the portfolio;
- Assembling information and relevant data on the location and quality of conservation targets;
- Designing a network of conservation areas that most effectively meets the goals; and
- Selecting the highest priority conservation areas in the portfolio for conservancy action.

The primary benefit of using these planning processes from both the public and private sectors is that they (1) provide a substantial body of sound research, thinking and discussion about the varying emphasis to be given to the scientific, economic, social and political considerations; and (2) permit VaULT and its Conservation Partners to move forward utilizing existing tools.

### ► **Heritage Areas (Regional Level)**

The Heritage component of the proposed Virginia Land Conservation System functions at the regional level. One of the key precepts of this element is that the culture of an area is derived from the natural resources that were the foundation of its growth and development. For example, distinctive traditions, land uses, and activities have developed around forestry, farming, fishing, coal mining, and textile manufacture. All of these Virginian ways of life have developed, and should be experienced, within the context of the natural resources on which they depend.

While emphasizing the importance of conserving unique and significant natural resources, the regional Heritage component places an equal emphasis on conserving the cultural landscape. The Shenandoah Valley with its small villages interspersed with broad expanses of farmland and overlaid with the historic encounters of the Civil War, is a prime example of a Heritage Area. The marshes, rivers and shallow bays of the Chesapeake Bay, Eastern Shore and barrier islands not only represent some of the most fragile aquatic habitats in the world, but also harbor the waterfowl, fish, clams, crabs and oysters that have been the backbone of the local economy for centuries. An overlay of Virginia's Rural Historic Districts with commensurate layers of the Virginia Conservation Lands Assessment would demonstrate many significant relationships.

Heritage Areas also connect resource protection efforts to tourism and economic development. Through regional partnerships and public grassroots planning strategies, these resources are identified, protected, enhanced and promoted to strengthen regional economies through increased tourism, creation of new jobs and stimulation of public and private partnerships for new investment opportunities. This holistic and bottoms-up approach to planning ensures that the industrial legacy of a region—and the cultural, educational and recreational values inherent to it—are preserved for future generations.

**The John Singleton Mosby Heritage Area**, located in Loudoun and Fauquier counties, was formed in 1995 to increase awareness of the historic, cultural and natural qualities of the renowned “hunt country” of the northern Piedmont. Named for the Confederate colonel who harried Union troops throughout the region, the Mosby Heritage area retains much of the landscape and the landmarks of three centuries of our Nation's history. A 1999 study, *Profiting from Preservation*, was the first study of the economic benefits of preservation in a rural area of Virginia and determined that:

- The renovation of historic structures, valued at more than \$37.7 million in the past decade, contributed more than 18 million to local household income and created nearly 1000 jobs
- Travelers spending topped \$725 million and garnered \$14 million in local taxes in 1997, as 1.5 million heritage tourists visited local historic sites, battlefields, villages and farms
- Preservation of the region's open space created significant savings for local governments and taxpayers by producing millions in surplus tax revenues
- The agricultural sector remained an important contributor to the heritage area's economy, supporting \$92 million in sales annually and up to 21 percent of local employment.



### ► **Community Framework (local level)**

The third tier of the proposed Virginia Land Conservation System is grounded in local communities. In this approach the state becomes a major source of technical knowledge and assistance and enables the local communities to address the conservation of natural and cultural resources in the context of state and regional priorities and planning paradigms.

While all local jurisdictions are required to prepare a Comprehensive Plan to guide development of their “gray infrastructure” – and many have engaged in “visioning” processes in hopes of sustaining the character of their communities – for the most part, these planning exercises take place in a geographical vacuum. The technology transfer envisioned by the proposed Virginia Land Conservation System would invest communities with the capability to integrate regional green infrastructure priorities into their land use planning decision-making. As Ed McMahon of The Conservation Fund has often stated, “The first principle of good development is knowing where NOT to develop.”

**Trust for Public Land’s Green Print Program:** The Trust for Public Land lays out a three step process by which communities can identify and implement their land conservation priorities: (1) defining a conservation vision, (2) securing conservation funds, and (3) acquiring and managing park and conservation lands. Called “green printing”, together these three steps “provide a strategy for a community’s future growth that emphasizes land conservation to ensure quality of life, clean air and water, recreation and economic health. It is up to each community to define and implement a unique conservation vision—one that addresses the diverse needs and issues of the region and the priorities of its residents”. With greenprinting, communities can protect the places that sustain and define their community while guiding development in a way that follows sensible growth patterns. Protecting land then becomes one component in a larger effort to grow wisely and improve the overall quality of life in a community.

Issues such as economic viability and sustainability can be tied to efforts to protect the community’s natural and cultural resources and quality of life. For example, the popular and successful “Living Towns” program sponsored by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the “Virginia Main Street” Program under the auspices of the Virginia Department of Housing and Economic Development and the “Heritage Tourism” initiative of the Virginia Tourism Corporation, demonstrate how historic preservation and economic development can be integrated to sustain the character and viability of community. Watershed planning for drinking water protection combines land conservation with public health and economic development benefits. Communities may take action within their own boundaries to ensure that their uniquely characteristic resources are protected; or they may band with other communities to conserve regionally significant natural and cultural resources are conserved.

VaULT recommends the following strategies and actions for building a Virginia Land Conservation System.

**Strategy A. Recommendations to Establish a Virginia Land Conservation System**  
**Virginia's Land Trusts, localities and the Commonwealth should work together to:**

#	Action	2003	2004-2005	2006 & Beyond	Responsible Entity
A1	Establish a Virginia Land Conservation System that integrates Green Infrastructure, Heritage and Community components; assume responsibility for its implementation.		X	X	Natural Resources Secretariat VDACS Va Tourism Corp VaULT
A2	Set the goal of 1 million conserved acres by 2007 to include properties protected by private land trusts as well as state agencies	X			General Assembly Governor VaULT
A3	Fund expansion of the Va. Conservation Land Assessment (VCLA) to complete coverage of the entire state		X		General Assembly/ DCR
A4	Distribute the VCLA and Conservation Lands Data Base (CLDB) GIS mapping and data base to all Planning District Commissions and Local Jurisdictions		X		DCR, Natural Heritage Division
A5	Continue to update VCLA and CLDB			X	DCR/NHP
A6	Design a baseline template for documentation of significant conservation values to enable land trusts and public agencies to benchmark progress in building the VA Land Conservation System		X		Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute (VNRLI)
A7	Appoint a VaULT representative to the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Board and Technical Committee	X			General Assembly Governor
A8	Protect and manage Virginia's Green Infrastructure as a core government service at state and local levels	X	X	X	All State and Local Governments
A9	Support local land use planning and zoning that incorporates Green Infrastructure principles along with social and economic development considerations.		X		Local Government land Trusts
A10	Coordinate all priority land conservation projects to make the best use of available federal funding		X	X	DCR/DOF /DGIF
A11	Increase the technical capacity of Planning District Commissions to support land conservation planning by local governments and land trusts		X	X	DCR/VaULT General Assembly



**Strategy B: Educate the Stakeholders**

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It was a consensus opinion among Linking Lands Regional Workshop participants that *if*:

- landowners fully understood the land conservation options available to them,
- legislators and the general public were knowledgeable about the economic, social and cost benefits of land conservation, and
- appointed and elected officials responsible for local land use and zoning decisions understood the value of green infrastructure to their constituents and community character...

... *Then* land conservation practices would become the standard rather than the exception in community and state planning and funding priorities.

The unprecedented support for the 2002 State Parks and Natural Areas Bond Referendum demonstrated two things: 1) the public is ready for the land conservation message, and 2) a well designed and coordinated educational (marketing) campaign, endorsed at the highest levels of government and the business community, will be successful. The VaULT education strategy, therefore, is to develop an objective and persuasive land conservation message that can be delivered through multiple channels at the state, regional and local levels. A successful land conservation media campaign would do well to focus on three central themes:

**1. Protecting Land is a Private Property Right**

The belief in private property rights resonates in the soul of the Old Dominion. And unquestionably, the decision to leave a legacy of open space to one's heirs is as much a private property right as the decision to subdivide it for residential development. The decision to preserve forever the natural beauty of a river valley, the habitat of an endangered species, or simply one's "home place" is no more an irretrievable and irreversible decision than to build a shopping center on the family farm. Virginians understand full well that they have the right to do with their land as they wish. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Virginia is a national leader in the number of voluntarily donated conservation easements.

**2. Smart Conservation is Smart Growth**

A basic premise of this Plan is that land conservation practices are consistent with economic stability goals and are integral to ensuring the kinds of communities in which all Virginians wish to live, work and play. ***Linking Lands Workshop*** participants took great exception to the perception of some that opposing sprawl and other costly and failed land use practices is the same as opposing economic development. They were insistent that the old ideas that pit "conservationists" against "developers" should be discarded in favor of a new paradigm that more accurately reflects the following economic realities in Virginia.

*Natural Resource Industries Fuel the Economic Engine:* The three top generators of revenue and jobs in the Commonwealth— agriculture, forestry and tourism – all depend on the conservation of Virginia’s natural and cultural resources and “working lands.” As stated in Virginia’s Forests, published in 2001 by the Department of Forestry, “Stronger conservation of the forest land base and a greater knowledge of how forests and people interact are necessary if the benefits of forestlands are to be sustained

*Cost of Public Services is Mounting:* At the local level, the rising cost of public services is an equally pressing issue in both rural and suburban/urban communities. The idea that communities can “build” their way to prosperity through development of their open space is losing credibility as both rural and suburban/urban localities struggle to meet the financial burdens of new schools, roads, water and sewer, and other public services. Studies consistently show that residential development requires between \$1.19 - \$1.25 in public services for every \$1 of taxes paid, whereas open space and agricultural lands require only \$0.30- 0.75 in public services for every \$1 of tax revenue collected. Cows still do not go to school.

Government officials and taxpayers alike need to be informed of the tradeoffs between ever-expanding land development and land conservation. Localities and the land conservation community need better tools, such as a simplified generic build-out analysis model, to calculate the costs and benefits of economic development alternatives.

### Economic Benefits of Working Lands

- **Agriculture:** Contributes nearly \$36 Billion in annual sales or 12.3% of all sales in Virginia and 11.2% of Total Gross Products. Agricultural sales directly contribute \$12.78 billion and \$ 6.69 billion is generated where farm related income is spent in other sectors – with a significant portion supporting the economic viability of rural towns and villages. Agriculture provides 338,000 jobs, nearly 10% of total jobs statewide.
- **Forestry:** Contributes over \$30 Billion annually in benefits to Virginia’s economy. Harvesting, processing and marketing of forest products generate \$25.4 billion annually while forest-related recreational spending exceeds \$3 billion annually. Carbon sequestering and air pollution control benefits exceed \$1.9 Billion. Every \$1 landowners receive for their timber generates \$35.39 of value-added to Virginia’s economy and provides over 248,000 jobs.
- **Tourism and Recreation** - In 2000 more than 32.8 million visitors stayed overnight in Virginia and spent nearly \$13 billion in the Commonwealth. Travel expenditures contributed nearly \$1.1 billion to state and local taxes. Virginia state parks visitors contribute an estimated \$128 million to the state’s tourism industry. Virginia’s one million anglers spent \$812 million on fishing tackle and related items in 1996, generating 1.6 billion in economic output. More than 2.2 million individuals are spending nearly \$700 million annually on wildlife watching in Virginia

### 3. The Green Infrastructure has Grassroots

All land use—like all politics—is local. If local land use decisions are to align with, and support implementation of a Virginia Land Conservation System (Strategy A), local planners and conservation leaders need access to essential planning tools including GIS mapping capability, DCR’s Conservation Lands Data Base and Virginia Land Conservation Assessment. Land conservation planners also need a template for consistent and cumulative documentation of significant ecological, historic and environmentally sensitive lands. This information should be made available to land trusts and public agencies in a manner that protects landowner privacy and locations of sensitive ecological resources and which facilitates cooperation between state and local land use planners.

***A statewide Natural Resources Marketing Strategy*** is needed to (1) clearly articulate the benefits of land conservation for landowners and communities, (2) Ensure the accuracy, consistency and relevancy of information distributed through all the channels; and (3) Deliver technical assistance and educational tools to support local and regional land use planning and private land conservation activities. Such a marketing program should, at a minimum, include the following components:

- A basic “Conservation Toolkit” for distribution statewide, not only to land trusts and landowners, but also to all parties involved in land transactions, e.g., realtors, appraisers, bank officials and attorneys, land developers, elected officials and government planners. This series of publication should be written in non-bureaucratic language, should clearly delineate the various governmental and private land conservation programs available to landowners and a brief summary of procedural and application guidelines, land trust and agency contacts
- Education workshops for targeted audiences – landowners, legislators, local officials, etc.
- Television and radio Public Service Announcements, newspaper and magazine articles
- Technical assistance for regional and local planning agencies and land trusts/private conservation organizations including
  - Transference of DNH databases information to appropriately certified entities
  - Basic software model for conducting community build out analyses based on local geographic features, Comprehensive Plans and Zoning Ordinances
  - A “template” for consistent and cumulative documentation of significant conservation values integral to the Virginia Land Conservation System.

- A Land Conservation Institute that provides elected officials, community planners, natural resource professionals and interested citizens with a clear understanding of the interconnectedness of land use decisions and the tools for building Virginia's green infrastructure. (Could be an extension of the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute.

### **The Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute (VNRLI)**

VNRLI was established in 2000 as a partnership program of the University of Virginia Institute for Environmental Negotiation, the Virginia Tech Center for Economic Education and the Virginia Department of Forestry.

#### **The VNRLI Vision**

Virginia's communities will engage in productive dialogue and collaborative problem solving of natural resource issues important to community sustainability and, thus, be able to effectively manage, conserve, and protect Virginia's natural resources.

#### **The VNRLI Mission**

To develop leaders in the Commonwealth who can help groups involved in contentious natural resource issue move beyond conflict toward consensus building and collaborative problem solving.

To achieve this, the VNRLI Objective is to create a Leadership Network of People:

- ✓ Who are engaged in working with Virginia's natural resources at all levels, from scientific to the policy levels
- ✓ Who are drawn from all sectors of activity – local, state, and federal government, elected officials, industry and private businesses, academia, civic organizations, nonprofit environmental organizations, and individual citizen activists
- ✓ Who will earn each other's trust while respecting each others different perspectives
- ✓ Who will be able to call on each other over the years for assistance and ideas; and
- ✓ Who will have the leadership skills needed to engage in collaborative problem solving around environmental issues, to move beyond conflict, and to find creative solutions.

The curriculum challenges participants in each of six three-day workshops to: 1) Gain a deeper understanding of key environmental issues in Virginia and opportunities for dialogue and collaborative problem solving; 2) Gain personal skills in leadership and collaborative problem solving. Leadership development is based on the model of "leaders as principled conveners, facilitators, and stakeholders."

**Strategy B. Recommendations to Educate the Stakeholders**  
**Virginia's Land Trusts, localities and the Commonwealth should work together to:**

#	Action	2003	2004-2005	2006 & Beyond	Responsible Entity
B1	Appoint a Task Force to plan, design and implement a Natural Resources /Marketing Campaign for Land Conservation (to include VaULT, DCR, DOF, VDACS, DIIR, Va Tourism Corp., Farm Bureau agencies and private sector experts		X		Governor
B2	Compile a basic, standardized multi-media "Conservation Tool Kit" for use by all Virginia land trusts and interested agencies; broadly distribute in electronic and print formats		X		VaULT DCR Office of Land Conservation
B3	Facilitate transfer of Natural Heritage Program database information to qualified organizations and governmental units		X		DCR-NHD/SWDC VaULT
B4	Endow the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute as a continuing program		X		Governor General Assembly
B5	Establish a VA Land Conservation Institute to enhance land use planners' and decision-makers' knowledge of the principles of green infrastructure and other economic and land use planning tools that support state conservation goals and effective community solutions			X	Virginia-APA Universities VA Association of Counties; Planning Commissioners Inst.
B6	Sponsor local workshops on land conservation options	X	X	X	VaULT/DCR/DOF Watershed Roundtables
B7	Develop software for a simplified generic "build out analysis" and other economic cost-benefit tools for use by private and public planners		X		Universities Private Sector

### **Strategy C: Strengthen the Capacity of Land Trusts**

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As noted earlier in this report, 81 percent of lands permanently conserved over the past decade have come through private land conservation actions; and nearly 60 percent of the 29 private nonprofit land trusts now operating in the Commonwealth have been chartered in the same period. These two facts speak volumes about the effectiveness of private land conservation efforts and the major role that land trusts are taking in protecting the Commonwealth's significant natural, cultural, scenic and recreational resources and in conserving working farm and forest lands. Virginia's experience mirrors the growth of land trusts nationwide: local and regional land trusts alone have protected over 10 million acres in the United States in the past ten years.

The diversity of experience, resources and capacities of Virginia's land trusts has the potential to build a strong and unified voice in the cause of land conservation that can resonate from the streets and meeting halls of rural communities to the halls of the State Capitol. To achieve this goal will require:

#### **► Technology transfer for building the organizational strength of local land trusts**

- Most local land trusts have been organized in recent years by citizen activists in response to threatened loss of natural and/or cultural resources with significant community value including working farms and forest lands. While garnering financial resources is frequently felt to be the most urgent immediate need, access to technical expertise is the key to effective land protection efforts. This expertise includes an understanding of local and state land use planning processes and regulations, GIS mapping capability, and access to databases of critical natural resources. The Virginia Conservation Lands Assessment database currently being constructed by the DCR Natural Heritage Program will be an extraordinarily useful tool for land trusts in documenting ecological resources, assessing threats and developing land protection strategies. The availability of this information to land trusts, as well as local government agencies, can provide a common ground for working together. Access to these planning tools will greatly increase the capacity of local land trusts to base their land protection efforts on sound scientific knowledge and to integrate their efforts with statewide green infrastructure priorities. In return, land trusts can help leverage state protection efforts for specific sites with critical natural and cultural resource resources by "buffering" these sensitive ecological areas with conservation easements on adjoining properties.

Building the capacity of land trusts also requires a continuing focus on organizational development needs including volunteer management, membership and fundraising skills.

Fortunately, the Land Trust Alliance is a rich source of capacity building expertise available to all land trusts. Land trust boards and staff also need to continuously upgrade their knowledge of current and new land use and conservation legislation and practices including Virginia’s new tax incentives for land conservation. Several regional land trusts are now taking the lead in providing this information.

### ► **Adoption of consistent standards and practices for land trust operations**

As the number of land trusts continues to increase in the Commonwealth and across the country, so has the awareness of the need for strict accountability for their operations—to landowners who entrust the long-term stewardship of their property to land trusts; to government officials who look to land trusts to assist in implementing land use planning objectives; and to public and private individuals and organizations who provide essential financial backing for land conservation efforts.

Recognizing this need for high standards of accountability and consistency of land conservation practices, the Land Trust Alliance, the national umbrella organization of land trusts, published *Standards and Practices* in 1989 (revised 1993). This document outlines the “Standards and Practices that the Land Trust Alliance believes are essential for the responsible operation of a land trust – a land trust that operates legally, ethically and in the public interest and that conducts a sound program of land transactions and stewardship. The Standards and Practices are meant to help new land trusts establish firm foundations on which to grow and to help existing land trusts review and improve the quality of their operations.

#### **Standards and Practices**

For all land trusts, the Standards and Practices provide a tool for assuring landowners, donors, and public agencies of the dependability of land trusts’ work.” The 15 Standards address:

- (1) Purpose and Goals,
- (2) Board Accountability,
- (3) Conflict of Interest
- (4) Basic Legal Requirements,
- (5) Fundraising
- (6) Financial and Asset Management
- (7) Staff, Consultants and Volunteers,
- (8) Selecting Projects,
- (9) Choosing the Best Conservation Method
- (10) Examining the Property,
- (11) Ensuring Sound Transactions,
- (12) Tax Benefits,
- (13) Board Approval of Transactions,
- (14) Conservation Easement Stewardship, and
- (15) Land Stewardship

These *Standards and Practices* provide both a road map and a yardstick for measuring the efficacy of private land conservation. (See Appendix \_\_\_ for a summary description of each Standard. An accompanying publication, *The Standards and Practices Guidebook: An Operating Manual for Land Trusts*, provides detailed guidelines, shared lessons learned and examples of forms.

Effective January 1, 2003, ALL land trusts nationwide must formally subscribe to these Standards and Practices to retain their status as LTA Sponsors.



► **Establishment of consistent criteria for documenting natural and cultural resources in drafting easements and other land negotiations.**

For years the role of most regional and local private land trusts in Virginia has been to facilitate donation of easements to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, rather than holding them in their own name. They have therefore relied on VOF protocols for documenting the conservation values of donor properties. Since, under Virginia Code, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation is the “default” easement holder for all chartered land trusts in the Commonwealth, VOF’s criteria for evaluating proposed open space easements donations should be an initial benchmark for land trusts engaged in drafting easements.

However, the development of sophisticated mapping tools and resource inventory databases such as the Virginia Conservation Lands Assessment (VCLA) and the DOF Forest Assessment, as well as more diversified land conservation settings, now highlight the need for a more comprehensive approach to documenting conservation easements and other land transactions to support statewide planning. Expanded criteria and documentation protocols should include:

- *Green Infrastructure elements:* A common set of ecological, archaeological and geographical and other data “elements” consistent with VCLA data fields should be promulgated for use in all conservation easement texts. These elements may include, but are not limited to, identification of watershed and ecoregion locations, and proximity to Natural Heritage Program conservation sites and stream conservation units.
- *Flexibility in acreage and density restrictions:* VOF guidelines “encourage” an average density of one development right per 100 acres in rural areas, but there is no minimum acreage requirement for parcel size. In urban or urbanizing areas VOF guidelines state “parcel sizes may vary according to the characteristics of the property and the amount of development which can be sustained without compromising the conservation values of the property.” Nonetheless, VOF rarely considers accepting easements on properties of less than 50 acres. In both urban and rural areas, local land trusts have expressed the need for more flexibility to allow limited development to meet the landowner’s economic needs, while preventing destruction of the conservation value of the property. Evaluating prospective easements on their conservation values rather than acreage or density factors would focus greater attention on the common attributes of green infrastructure and conservation needs within the community. However, it is imperative that all conservation easements accepted by land trusts meet the IRS 501(c)3 standards for charitable contributions.



- *Integration of criteria for federal and state grant programs*, including USFS Forest Legacy and USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement programs, Virginia Landmark Register/ National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation. Incorporating relevant criteria would increase land trust capacity to leverage grant funding by demonstrating the relationship of individual grant proposals to larger regional and state land conservation efforts

► **Effective collaboration between national, regional and local land trusts and between land trusts and state agencies.**

The Department of Forestry’s Forest Legacy Public Input Process in 2000 found that *“Over and above all other suggestions and concerns was the strong message that conservation easement organizations need to find a way to coordinate and collaborate in their efforts.”*

National, regional and local land trusts have distinct, but complementary roles to play in the protection of Virginia’s significant natural and cultural resources.

- National conservation organizations, such as The Nature Conservancy and Trust for Public Lands provide expertise to develop scientific methodologies for building the green infrastructure, negotiating complex land transactions, developing conservation policy and securing funding resources and building coalitions
- Regional land trusts provide a unifying focus for landscape-level conservation and planning, regional networking and coordination, and technical assistance to local land trusts. Regional organizations, such as the James River Association and Potomac [River] Conservancy, focus on specific resources; others, such as the Valley Conservation Council and Piedmont Environmental Council are geographically based, serving 11 counties and 9 counties, respectively.
- The role of local land trusts goes to the core of successful land conservation — that is the understanding of their local community’s landscape, character and people. At the end of the day, land conservation takes place one-on-one, neighbor-to-neighbor over the kitchen table!

Collaborative projects, drawing on the respective strengths of these land trusts will produce synergistic outcomes and better land conservation results. For example, protection projects of national or regional land trust organizations will frequently have ramifications for and impacts on, local land use plans – of which a local land trust may have greater knowledge. Or, a local land trust seeking to protect an historic site or natural area of particular value to the local community may require additional technical, legal or funding support from a “sister” regional or national organization.

Collaboration between state agencies and land trusts is equally important. While the Virginia Outdoors Foundation will undoubtedly continue to be the largest easement holding organization in Virginia, recent budget cuts have strained their capacity to absorb the workload beyond reasonable limits. VOF should therefore be encouraged to partner with local land conservation organizations in Virginia to increase their capacity and enhance the effectiveness of both organizations.

Land trusts can assist VOF by educating landowners about how easements work and by pre-screening prospective easement donors to determine their real level of interest in advance of contacting VOF. In this process, land trusts can establish long-term relationships with landowners in their community. And, because the local land trusts then know where these easements are located, they can be aware of activities on-site that may constitute possible easement violations or proposed land use changes on adjoining properties that would adversely impact the conservation values of the eased property. For its part, VOF should coordinate with local land trusts regarding land protection activities in their jurisdictions. VOF should also be encouraged to co-hold easements with land trusts when Open Space Preservation Trust Fund or other purchase of easement funding is involved and on a case-by-case basis otherwise.

Joint projects undertaken by land trusts and other public agencies such as the Virginia Extension Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts or regional DOF offices can also effectively pool resources and expertise. Co-holding of easements with a state agency is particularly important for land trusts concerned about legal costs for enforcing conservation easement restrictions. A systematic approach for institutionalizing these arrangements, such as Memoranda of Agreement, should be developed.

### ► **Funding**

First, last and always, funding is the sine qua non for strengthening the capacity of land trusts. The most critical funding needs are for:

- *Staffing* – The Land Trust Alliance’s National Survey reports that paid staff is the key to breakthroughs in land trust effectiveness
- *Land Protection* – Whether for the purchase of development rights, bargain sales or fee simple acquisition of properties, a funding source is absolutely necessary for “doing deals.”
- *Legal Defense* – The specter of enormous legal costs to defend an easement is a strong deterrent to many land trusts holding their own easements.

**Strategy C. Recommendations to Strengthen Land Trust Capacity**  
**Virginia's Land Trusts, localities and the Commonwealth should work together to:**

#	Action	2003	2004-2005	2006 & Beyond	Responsible Entity
C1	Provide local and regional training for land trust Boards, staff and members for improved operations	X	X	X	Land Trust Alliance VaULT
C2	Require adoption of LTA Standards and Practices as a prerequisite for VLCF funding or co-holding of easements with state agencies	X			VICF state agencies
C3	Ensure that all conservation easements negotiated comply with IRS 501(c) 3 standards	X	X	X	All land trusts
C4	Develop a protocol to provide land trusts with access to state agency databases to strengthen local planning efforts		X		DCR DOF
C5	Encourage VOF and other state agencies to co-hold conservation easements with private land trusts	X			Natural Resources Secretariat
C6	Provide technical assistance including access to GIS mapping and other land use planning tools to local land trusts, particularly in rural areas		X	X	PDCs Local Governments/ Universities Business/Industry
C7	Encourage more collaboration between land trusts	X	X	X	VLCF VaULT land trusts

**Strategy D: Build Partnerships**

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Creating partnerships for effective land conservation and resource protection is a core principle underlying the establishment of Virginia's United Land Trusts and has been a consistent theme – and primary outcome — of this strategic planning process. The *VaULT Linking Lands Workshops* sought to facilitate regional collaboration between public and private sector agencies, organizations and decision makers. In actuality, this process began with the 2001 conference on *Visioning the Future of Virginia's Environment*, which brought together for the first time over 100 representatives of land trusts and state and local government agencies. A key principle of that continuing vision is “to build a continuum of public and private organizations, each working on their own priorities, that link together local, regional and state land conservation efforts.” This principle has been reinforced by the Governor's Natural Resource Leadership Summit Agenda which calls for strengthening partnerships between “business, industry, local government, outdoor recreation, environmental, preservation and conservation interests.”

The potential for effective public-private partnerships spans the spectrum of local, regional, state and national entities. State, regional and local government entities have essential funding and technical assistance roles to play; and the expertise and regional perspective of public agency participants are essential for collaborative efforts to implement a Virginia Land Conservation System. For example:

- Government agencies can provide valuable technological support and technical assistance for smaller land trusts, particularly in the area of GIS mapping, viewshed analyses and natural and cultural resource inventories. The vertical organizational structure of the Department of Forestry provides opportunities for collaboration at local, regional and state levels.
- Partnering with the 42 Soil and Water Conservation Districts across the state offers an excellent means of working with locally elected Directors to educate other “peer” elected officials about land conservation needs, as well as utilizing SWCD expertise on water quality issues. The SWCDs also have direct lines of communication and authority with the Soil and Water Conservation Division in the state Department of Conservation and Recreation.
- The Office of Land Conservation in the Department of Conservation and Recreation is acting as a clearinghouse of information and references about land conservation tools for land trusts, private landowners, and government agencies.

Partnerships between land trusts and business and industry leaders will further the Governor's Natural Resources Leadership Summit Agenda for land conservation. The economic benefits of land conservation are a critically important message to bring to the

attention of both rural and urban community leaders. Land trusts are well positioned to carry the message that “Land conservation IS economic development” in a multitude of ways including sustaining the viability of farming and forestry industries; supporting the tourism and outdoor recreation industries; attracting new businesses seeking “quality of life” benchmarks, and encouraging environmentally sensitive residential development.

A principal partner can, and should be, the *Virginia Federation of Farm Bureaus*. The time has come to make common cause with the farming community, both at home in the local community and in the legislative halls of the General Assembly. Our mutual interests far outweigh any practical differences. The strong presence of Farm Bureau representatives at the *Linking Lands Workshops* is a clear indication of willingness on the part of that organization to partner with land trusts in conserving Virginia’s working lands.

Partnerships with other business and industry groups can also yield significant results:

- *Realtors, Estate Planners/Attorneys and Appraisers* often have the first contact with landowners seeking to dispose of their property and can provide first hand contacts with conservation-minded buyers and sellers. Land trusts should take the lead in educating these professionals on the tools of land conservation and the mutual benefits for them and their clients.
- *Corporate partners and local businesses* frequently encourage their employees to volunteer for community projects. They may also underwrite a special project or provide technical and organizational development assistance on a pro-bono basis.
- *Business and professional organizations* not only maintain databases of their membership, which they might be willing to share for a special event or project, but publish newsletters which can be a place to get your message out to potential members who might not otherwise get connected.

Land trusts can take the lead in recognizing natural and cultural resource stewardship efforts by businesses and industries that “greenline” their corporate budgets and who engage in natural and cultural resource stewardship on an ongoing basis.

Establishing long-term relationships and building trust with the business and industry community can be one of the most productive and effective partnerships for land conservation. For example, since 1987, Vermont’s non-profit conservation organizations, housing industry, municipalities and state agencies have utilized Vermont Housing and Conservation Board grants to conserve over 320,720 acres of land while building 6,197 units of affordable housing. This investment has generated jobs and positive economic impact on local communities and leveraged an additional \$450 million in funding.

Partnerships may focus on a particular natural resource, education or a regional interest. What is important is that Virginia's land trusts be recognized as equal partners in the efforts to conserve Virginia's Heritage. The potential for building vigorous and creative partnerships has been demonstrated by the "Success Stories" described below.

**BETTER MODELS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

**Partners:** Valley Conservation Council, The Conservation Fund

**Focus:** Land Use and Community Character (Education)

**Location:** Shenandoah Valley and statewide

In 1999, the Valley Conservation Council, a regional land trust serving 11 counties in the Shenandoah Valley, in partnership with The Conservation Fund, a national conservation organization, developed and published *Better Models for Development in the Shenandoah Valley*.

Addressing the "hot" issue of sprawl development and loss of rural character in the Valley of Virginia, this publication was an instant success. A year later it was expanded and republished as *Better Models for Development in Virginia*. Written by Ed McMahon (TCF) with Sara Hollberg and Shelly Mastran, this "one-of-a-kind guide to creating, maintaining and enhancing livable communities in Virginia" has become a highly valuable resource for land trusts, planners and citizen activities seeking to preserve the rural character of their communities. This publication is the recipient of the Natural Resources Council of America 2002 Award of Achievement and is being used as a textbook by the Virginia Institute for Economic Development at Virginia Tech.

**REBIRTH OF THE ELIZABETH RIVER**

**Partners:** The Elizabeth River Project, Inc; Virginia Environmental Endowment, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Norfolk Boat Works and other navigation industries; cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth and Virginia Beach and the citizens of Elizabeth River and the Commonwealth of Virginia

**Focus:** Water Quality Improvement

**Location:** Tidewater Virginia

Four citizens conceived The Elizabeth River Project in November 1991 in response to the infamy of Elizabeth River pollution and public sentiment that the river was dead. In fact the river had been improving for decades because of increased industrial and regulatory stewardship, but government efforts to go further lacked citizen support. A survey of 65 citizens from all walks of life determined that the community would support restoring the river through positive approaches.

The project was incorporated in 1993 and a three-year planning effort to develop a "risk management" plan for the watershed was funded by the US Environmental Protection Agency Office of Policy and Planning and the Virginia Environmental Endowment. In February 1996 a 120 member Watershed Action Team reached consensus on priorities to address the river's worst problems; and in June of that year the Elizabeth River project unveiled



an 18 Point Action Plan for Restoration of the Elizabeth River. Implementation of the Plan has led to more than \$7 million in community-wide activity ranging from voluntary projects by “River Star” industries to citizen backyard plantings, to wetland restoration, to a multi-million dollar project funded by four cities, the state and federal government to clean up toxic sediments in the riverbed. 50 businesses currently participating in the Project have together documented reducing toxics by more than 141 million pounds and conserving more than 150 acres of urban wildlife habitat.

#### **AN URBAN NATURAL AREA PRESERVE**

**Partners:** Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, Fairfax County Park Authority, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, DCR Natural Heritage Program, Virginia Land Conservation Foundation

**Focus:** Natural Resource Protection

**Location:** Fairfax County/Northern Virginia

The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT), working with the Fairfax County Park Authority, Board of Supervisors and Department of Planning and Zoning, and the Virginia Department of Conservation’s Natural Heritage Program preserved a globally rare forest in western Fairfax County. The 384-acre property is adjacent to 830 acres of public parkland, and together with other parkland will pre-

serve nearly 1500 acres of open space in one of the fastest growing areas of Northern Virginia. NVCT won a grant from the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation for \$730,000 toward purchase of the property and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors provided additional funds to save one of the largest forest communities of its kind in the Commonwealth.

At the site, Natural Heritage biologists found one of the largest intact stands in Virginia of the state and globally rare Basic Oak-Hickory Forest. The site also contains the state and globally rare Piedmont/Mountain Basic Woodland Community and three other rare plant species. The Fairfax County Park Authority now owns the property. Permanent protection of the most environmentally significant areas of the forest will be ensured through a conservation easement held by NVCT and a Deed of Dedication to DCR designating the area as a Natural Area Preserve. The goal of the joint effort is to allow the public to enjoy this land while protecting the significant biological resources.

#### **CONSERVATION FORESTRY**

**Partners:** The Nature Conservancy of Virginia, The Stuart Land & Cattle Company

**Focus:** Natural Resource Protection and Timbering

**Location:** Clinch River Valley, Southwest Virginia

In an historic undertaking, The Nature Conservancy has purchased logging rights on 5,750 acres of privately owned and environmentally sensitive woodland on a ranch in the Clinch River Valley in Southwest Virginia. The conservation forestry project is directly an essential element of a 13-year effort to protect the Clinch Valley region, an area that is home to 21 federally endangered species. Selectively logging the forest, which drains directly into the Clinch River,

will help preserve freshwater mussels and clams. It will also preserve habitat for song-birds such as hermit thrush, Magnolia warbler and Swainson's warbler, which need large contiguous tracts of forest to survive. Operating at a landscape scale, TNC sees the management of working forests as key to the fulfillment of their mission.

Recognizing the economic pressures squeezing forest owners, especially in the rural Clinch Valley, the Conservancy has created options for providing reliable income to land-owners in exchange for the opportunity to practice conservation forestry on their properties. The Stuart Land and Cattle Company, the country's oldest continuously operating cattle ranch, will retain the acreage on its Rich Mountain Farm, which has been in the family for over 200 years. Under the arrangement, TNC will harvest timber in a way least disruptive to the land and make an annual payment to Stuart based on the value of the timber available for harvest each year.

#### **RAPPAHANNOCK RIVER WILDLIFE REFUGE**

**Partners:** Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, The Chesapeake Bay Foundation, The Conservation Fund, Virginia State Parks, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Focus:** Water Quality and Natural Resource Protection

**Location:** Rappahannock River, Northern Neck & Middle Peninsula

Along a 40-mile stretch of the tidal Rappahannock River between Virginia's Northern Neck and the Middle Peninsula, there is a vision for a 20,000-acre system of protected resource areas forming the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Building upon community recommendations addressing sustainable development within the seven-county corridor, the refuge is part of a plan that recognizes the importance of protecting the region's unique natural and cultural resources.

Multiple private and public entities have combined and leverage their resources and achievements to accomplish a variety of conservation projects. Beginning in 1995, the Trust for Public Land (TPL) took the lead in securing property and funding. Working cooperatively with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, TPL secured North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants to acquire the first two refuge parcels encompassing over 1300 acres. The match requirements for the grants were met by other conservation efforts including, the state's purchase of **Belle Isle State Park**, and the donation of land to The Nature Conservancy, conservation easements donated to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, and wetlands and stream buffer restoration projects by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

Working collaboratively with the State's congressional delegation, over \$5 million dollars in federal Land & Water Conservation Funds have been appropriated for acquisitions at the refuge. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Trust for Public Land, and The Nature Conservancy have used these funds to conserve about 4,500 additional acres in Richmond, Essex, King



George and Caroline Counties. In addition, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation continues to pursue donated conservation easements on properties along the river. Approximately 7000 acres of ecologically important land have been secured through easements or outright purchase in a 30-mile stretch between Tappahannock and Port Royal.

#### CREATING A SWAMP

**Partners:** Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, Cities of Chesapeake and Virginia Beach, Virginia Dare Soil & Water Conservation District; Virginia Departments of Conservation and Recreation, Environmental Quality, Game and Inland Fisheries, Transportation and Marine Resources Commission; United States Department of Agriculture/ Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Army Corp of Engineers, Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency; and The Nature Conservancy

**Focus:** The Southern Watershed Area consisting of sub-watersheds of Back Bay, The North Landing River and the Northwest River.

**Location:** Cities of Chesapeake and Virginia Beach

The Southern Watershed Area management Program (SWAMP) is a precedent-setting joint effort by 14 regional, state and federal public agencies and The Nature Conservancy intended to enhance management of the significant natural resources in the Southern Watershed Area of Chesapeake and Virginia Beach while accommodating the commercial and residential needs of the two cities. The area is the location of the canebrake swamp first described as a “green sea” by Captain John Smith 400 years ago and the focus of TNC’s Green Sea” program.

SWAMP is developing a Multiple Benefits Conservation Plan focusing on two areas: (1) identification of a set of riparian-based conservation corridors to be managed for multiple benefits including water quality protection, wildlife habitat enhancement, Natural Heritage Resource protection, compatible

recreation, nature-based tourism and environmental education, potential wetlands compensation capability, storm water management and ground water recharge; and (2) a methodology to select wetlands compensation areas for specific wetlands impacts. Under a memorandum of Agreement the signatory agencies agree to improve coordination and sharing of information, integrate mapping and methods to refine definition of the conservation corridor system, employ the shared methodology for selecting wetland compensation sites and refine the multiple benefits site selection process.

**Strategy D. Recommendations for Building Relationships**  
**Virginia's Land Trusts, localities and the Commonwealth should work together to:**

#	Action	2003	2004-2005	2006 & Beyond	Responsible Entity
D1	Collaborate and coordinate to implement the regional priorities identified at the <i>Linking Lands Workshops</i>	X	X	X	Land Trusts State/local gov'ts PDCs Resource-based industries
D2	Seek partnerships with local Farm Bureaus and Forestry organizations to conserve working lands	X	X	X	Land Trusts
D3	Join the Watershed Roundtables to assist in developing local watershed plans that include the full array of land conservation options	X	X	X	Land Trusts
D4	Explore partnerships between land trusts and major business and industry leaders	X	X	X	VaULT VA Manufacturers Association VA Home Builders Association and more

## Strategy E: Funding

First, last, and always, funding is everyone's most urgent land conservation strategy. Funding is the commodity in greatest demand and least supply in the Commonwealth. Once again, it must be stated that Virginia ranks 50<sup>th</sup> among the nation's states in per capita funding for parks, open space and the protection of significant natural and cultural resources. Funding is needed for:

- Meeting our Chesapeake Bay commitment of “permanent protection 20% of the watershed by 2010
- Preservation of threatened and endangered wildlife habitats,
- Purchase of Development Rights on working lands
- Water Quality Improvement in Virginia's Rivers and the Chesapeake Bay
- Protection of irreplaceable Archaeological and Historic Resources
- Virginia Outdoors Foundation
- Management of State Parks, Forests and Wildlife Management Areas that provide recreational opportunities for a growing population

The land trusts are unanimous in sending the message that this situation must be rectified. The Governor's Natural Resources Leadership Summit participants have issued a challenge to raise the Commonwealth's ranking for state funding from 50<sup>th</sup> to 40<sup>th</sup> within the next three years. To meet critical funding needs, this strategy focuses on new sources or mixes of funding that will enable the available funds to be used to greatest effect. Proposed funding mechanisms include (1) General Taxes, (2) Resource Related Taxes, and (3) Specific Tax Incentives. Each type is discussed below.

### 1. General Taxes

- *State and local General Obligation Bonds* – In November 2002 the State Parks and Natural Areas Bond Referendum was approved by 69 percent of the voters. Citizens have demonstrated a willingness to use bond funds to support initiatives that they perceive are managed effectively and have positive benefits for their communities. A state bond that offers matching funds to land trusts and local jurisdictions, and is predicated on an equitable distribution system can engender support for local bond referenda to support land conservation efforts.
- *Real Estate Transfer and Recordation Taxes* – At the state level, the portion of these taxes returned to the General Fund are seen as the most logical and consistent source of a dedicated fund for land conservation. Since most Virginia localities are funded primarily through property taxes, the opportunity exists to allow the local

governments to use a small percentage of real estate transfer taxes or property recordation taxes to fund local land conservation priorities.

- *License Plate Sales* – This initiative has been institutionalized with the increase in license fees beginning in July 2000 to fund the Quadra centennial for Jamestown, with additional funds going to conservation funding. The program would continue after the 2007 event with all funds going for land conservation purposes.
- *Tax Check Off* – Taxpayers receiving refunds are currently given the option of allocating a certain portion of the refund to a variety of programs. Programs related to land conservation could be consolidated into a single “line item” on the tax form with taxpayers given the option of designating funding for statewide or local programs. Alternatively, as part of collecting income tax from citizens, an option could be provided to indicate up to a certain amount of taxes to be spent on land conservation.
- *Tipping Fees* – This involves a tax for each ton of solid waste that is deposited in the landfills of Virginia. The three-fold objective of imposing such a fee would be to (1) encourage recycling and thereby reduce the amount of solid waste entering Virginia’s landfills; (2) provide funding to localities to close hazardous landfills and mitigate their environmental impact; and (3) thereafter, provide additional funding for land conservation activities in the locality where it is collected or for statewide purposes.
- *Gas Taxes* – A tax collected from the sale of each gallon of gas could be used in a manner similar to the Federal TEA 21 program. A small percentage could be collected and dedicated to the overall land conservation effort. Other options include a tax on marine or diesel fuels.
- *Sales Tax Revenue* – Although not currently a practice in Virginia other jurisdictions have allowed communities to dedicate a portion of their sales tax revenues to land conservation efforts. Variations on this idea included letting two or more counties share the sales revenues between them, or working through the Planning District Commissions on regional priorities.
- *Alternative Energy Taxes* – As alternative energy sources continue to grow they can be taxed at the exchange point. For example, closed landfills that are mined for methane gas production could be taxed for each cubic foot of gas generated. Similarly a solid waste incinerator that is generating electric power could be taxed for its output and utilities that buy back externally produced power from non-traditional sources such as solar, steam or wind powered generators could pay a tax accordingly.

## 2. Resource Related Taxes and Initiatives

- *Virginia Conservation Passport* – A Virginia Conservation passport that would function like a National Park Service Golden Eagle Passport could be authorized and marketed. Citizens would pay a set price for a “passport” that would entitle them to free access to State and local park participant fee areas. Funds would be used to support land conservation programs for state and local land conservation and resource enhancement projects, much as the hunting and fishing licenses do now.
- *Sales Taxes on Recreation-Related Equipment* – An additional sales tax on selected recreation-related equipment associated with biking, camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, sports, and perhaps even such items as boats, sport utility vehicles (SUV’s), recreational vehicles (RV’s) and off-road vehicles (ORV’s). These funds would be used for land conservation, resource enhancement and other outdoor recreation facilities.
- *Tourism Taxes* – This category of taxes would include hotels, restaurants, car rentals and similar use taxes. A small percentage of these taxes could be dedicated to the land conservation priorities, which are integral to supporting the tourism industry in Virginia.
- *Cell Phone Tax* – A tax, similar to the one imposed on land line telephones to fund implementation of the E911 phone system, could be imposed on cell phone usage. The City of Virginia Beach currently funds its Agricultural Reserve Purchase of Development Rights Programs through a cell phone tax.
- *Toll Dollars for Conservation* – On roads and bridges that open up previously rural areas to more intensive development, the toll amount could be increased to fund land conservation activities in that region to balance growth pressures.
- *Utility Taxes: Water and Sewer, and Electric* – The value of land conservation practices in protecting drinking water supplies and general water quality is a clear rationale for levying an additional tax on water and sewer bills by the local water and sewer agencies. These funds could be used to protect watersheds and riparian resources.

## 3. Specific Tax Incentives

- *Property Tax Abatements for Conservation* – Provide land and historic property owners that undertake specific conservation measures on critical resources with property tax abatement.
- *Implement tax breaks for performance of BMP’s.* Allow developers and businesses that initiate and maintain Best Management Practices (BMP’s) on their lands to receive a tax break or abatement.
- *Increase Rental/Lease or Permit Fees for the Virginia Rivers and Marine Commission (VRMC)* – Establish a small percentage increase in the VRMC fees for use in conservation of water resources.

**Strategy E. Funding Recommendations**  
**Virginia's Land Trusts, localities and the Commonwealth should work together to:**

#	Action	2003	2004-2005	2006 & Beyond	Responsible Entity
E1	Establish a dedicated source of funding to support VLCF's grant making authority (minimum of \$80 million annually)		X	X	Governor General Assembly
E2	Increase funding for Virginia Outdoors Foundation to meet demand for services		X	X	Governor General Assembly
E3	Fund the Open Space Lands Preservation Fund to assist landowners with costs of conservation easements		X	X	Governor General Assembly
E4	Fund the Agricultural Vitality Act		X	X	Governor General Assembly
E5	Fund completion of the Virginia Conservation Lands Assessment database to include entire state		X	X	Governor General Assembly
E6	Finance the protection and management of the green infrastructure as a primary public investment		X	X	General Assembly/ Local Governments
E7	Authorize state funding to support local land use planning and zoning that incorporates sound open space, natural and cultural resource conservation methods along with social and economic development considerations				General Assembly
E8	Coordinate all federal funding sources to focus on priority land conservation projects and utilize work program funding to sponsor workers for conservation projects	X	X		Natural Resource Agencies Local governments

## Conclusion

As we approach the Jamestown 2007 celebration, eyes, hearts and minds across the United States of America and across the world will be focused on the Commonwealth of Virginia. There could be no more fitting tribute—or lasting legacy—to those who were here and those who came here 400 years ago, than to ensure that their legacy will last for generations yet to come.

## **Appendix A: Land Trusts of Virginia**





## Land Trusts of Virginia

Conservation Organization	Founded	Region of Interest	Programs/Priorities
<b>National</b>			
American Farmland Trust	1980	Statewide	Farmland protection/ Ag Vitality/PDRs
Appalachian Trail Conference Land Trust	1985	Appalachian Trail Corridor - Georgia to Maine	Continuity of trail and accesses; protection of trail viewscape
Conservation Fund	?	Statewide	Land acquisition for expansion/ protection of federal lands; partnerships with other conservation organizations
Civil War Preservation Trust	1989	Statewide-Civil War Battlefield sites	
Land Trust Alliance	1982	Statewide	The national organization of Land Trusts promotes voluntary land conservation and strengthens land trust movements through leadership, information, training, publications and public land conservation policies
The Nature Conservancy	1950	Statewide/ Major programs: Clinch River (southwest) Green Sea (tidewater) Virginia Coastal Reserve, Chesapeake Rivers, Piedmont	Eco-region planning; preservation of biodiversity through habitat protection in "portfolio sites" and other areas; together with conservation partners, TNC has protected over 235,000 acres in Virginia
Trust for Public Land	1972	Statewide	Acquisition of land and easements that are conveyed to public agencies and other non-profits or permanent stewardship; urban parks; creation and expansion of wildlife refuges and forests
<b>State/Regional</b>			
500-Year Forest	1997	Statewide forests	Stewardship of forests; seeks minimum of one 500-year forest in each region
Central Virginia Battlefield Trust	2000	Shenandoah Valley Counties of Augusta, Clarke, Frederick, Highland, Page, Rockingham, Shenandoah, Warren; Cities of Harrisonburg, Staunton, Winchester, Waynesboro	Protection of 10 battlefield sites in the National Historic District in collaboration with National Park Service

**Land Trusts of Virginia** (cont'd)

Conservation Organization	Founded	Region of Interest	Programs/Priorities
Chesapeake Bay Foundation	1967	Chesapeake Bay's 64,000 sq. mile watershed in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania	SAVE THE BAY through Environmental Education & Environmental protection and restoration programs
James River Association	?	James River 340 sq. mile watershed	Protects riparian buffers; local planning/land use issues; State legislation & public policy issues; James Riverkeepers Pgm.
Land Trust of Virginia	1991	Statewide	Only private land trust chartered to operate throughout Virginia; holds conservation easements and co-holds with local land trusts
Northern Virginia Conservation Trust	1994	Counties of Arlington, Alexandria (city), Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, Stafford	<b>Paul: Please update</b>
Piedmont Environmental Council	1975	Counties of Albemarle, Clarke, Culpeper, Greene, Fauquier, Loudoun, Madison, Orange, Pr. William, Rappahannock	"Smart Growth" land use & transportation public policies; Conservation Easements to VOF; Conservation Buyers Program; Land Conservation Revolving Funds
Potomac Conservancy	1993	Potomac River Watershed: Potomac Gorge, Islands, main stem Potomac riverfront and major tributaries	Holds conservation easements and lands in fee simple on over 900 acres; technical assistance to local land trusts; river clean-up, riparian restoration, environmental education programs
Valley Conservation Council	1990	Counties of Alleghany, Augusta, Bath, Botetourt, Frederick, Highland, Page, Rockbridge, Rockingham, Shenandoah, Warren	Voluntary landowner actions including conservation easements and Agricultural & Forestal Districts; local comprehensive planning and land use issues; protection of existing communities
Virginia Outdoors Foundation	1966	Statewide	One of largest land trusts in U.S.; primary grantee of open space conservation easements on over 200,000 acres; back-up grantee for all other Va. Easements; administers Open Space Preservation Trust Fund grants; regional offices
Western Virginia Land Trust	1996	Counties of Franklin, Henry, Floyd, Carroll, Patrick, Grayson, Smith	Open space and forest conservation easements; technical assistance to localities

**Land Trusts of Virginia (cont'd)**

Conservation Organization	Founded	Region of Interest	Programs/Priorities
<b>Local</b>			
Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy	1998	Counties of Greene and Madison	Farmland, forests and open space conservation easements, protection of Hughes, Rapidan and South River watersheds, viewshed of Va. Byway 231 and Shenandoah National Park; conservation planning, education and community outreach
Burwell-Van Lennep Foundation	1967	Clarke County	?
Friends of Chesterfield Riverfront	1997	Chesterfield County	Implementation of Chesterfield County's Comprehensive Riverfront Plan
Friends of Dragon Run	1985	Dragon Run fresh water swamp	Preserve pristine fresh water swamp with conservation easements & education on protection of riparian areas/watershed
Hampton Land Conservancy	2002	City of Hampton and adjacent communities	Protection and enhancement of remaining natural areas in Hampton vicinity; maintenance of ecological communities
Jamestown Compact	2000	Loudoun, Fauquier Counties	?
Mathews County Land Conservancy	1994	Mathews County	?
Middle Peninsulas Land Trust	1997	Counties of ????	????
New River Land Trust	2001	New River Watershed: Montgomery, Floyd, Giles, Pulaski, Bland, Wythe, Grayson & Carroll counties; cities of Radford and Galax	Conserving regional scenic and recreational assets including New River, New River Trail State Park, Blue Ridge Parkway; public education on conservation options & VOF easements
Rivanna Conservation Society	?	Albemarle and Fluvanna Counties	Protection of Rivanna River watershed
Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust	2003	Accomack & Northampton counties	Preservation of rural areas, farms, forests, fisheries, waterfront and heritage of Virginia's Eastern Shore
Williamsburg Land Conservancy	1990	Historic Triangle: City of Wmsburg, James City and York Counties	Protection of over 600 acres of significant lands through conservation easements, gifts or purchase of land; education and advocacy and public/private partnerships

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## **Appendix B:**

### ***Linking Lands Workshops***



## A Report on The Land Conservation Priorities and Strategies Developed at the *Linking Lands* Regional Workshops

### Purpose of the Workshops

***Linking Lands: Conserving Virginia's Green Heritage*** continues the process of “*Visioning the Future of Virginia's Environment*” by planning for an integrated network of significant public and private, ecological, historic, cultural and recreational resources and working lands—the “green infrastructure” that shapes the character of our communities and the quality of our lives.

The consultants have been retained to prepare a strategic plan by Virginia's United Land Trusts (VaULT), the Virginia Department of Forestry (VOF) the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the U. S. Forest Service (USFS).

The Virginia's United Land Trusts have received a grant to develop a strategic plan that (1) Reviews the recent history of land conservation in Virginia; (2) Projects the status of land conservation in Virginia through 2010; (3) Ascertains the regional and local public and private land conservation capability, priorities and strategies; (4) Establishes guidelines and standards of practice for private participation in land conservation efforts; and (5) Makes recommendations relative to the ways and means of achieving the 2010 land conservation goals and objectives.

The Linking Lands Regional Workshops were conducted to facilitate development of the strategic plan. The six workshop regions were defined by watershed, eco-region and Planning District Commission boundaries. They brought together community, conservation, industry and government leaders from each region to:

- Assess the current status of land conservation within the region
- Identify regional opportunities, priorities and strategies for land conservation actions
- Identify the linkages between local, regional and statewide initiatives
- Develop strategies for obtaining resources that make conservation implementation possible
- Enhance the effectiveness of local and regional land conservation through shared resources and technical expertise
- Facilitate regional collaboration between public and private sector agencies, organizations and decision makers
- Learn about the planning tools and resources available from state agencies and private land conservation organizations

The goal of the workshops was to:

- Build a continuum of public and private organizations, each working on their own priorities, that link local, regional and state land conservation initiatives; and
- Lay the foundation for a statewide strategic land conservation plan.

The consultants have been graciously supported by the efforts of our Conservation Partners including the following:

- Virginia's United Land Trusts
- Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Virginia Outdoors Foundation
- Department of Forest
- Department of Game & Inland Fisheries
- Department of Historic Resources
- The Trust For Public Lands
- The Nature Conservancy
- Scenic Virginia
- Virginia Preservation Alliance
- Land Trust of Virginia

## Methodology

The information contained in this Report was collected as part of the six regional workshops conducted throughout the State of Virginia. Efforts were made to involve both the public and private sectors that wished to work toward identifying priority land conservation projects and strategies that would aid in implementation. The Planning District Commissions (PDC) were chosen as a baseline for the planning due to the abundance of planning data that is compiled in that jurisdictional unit.

Workshops were held at regional locations selected because they were accessible to the participants from the PDCs in that region. Representatives were invited from private land trusts, community and regional leaders interested in conserving natural and cultural resources, farmers, foresters, vintners and other agricultural landowners concerned about sustaining the productivity of their lands, private industry and business leaders committed to environmentally sensitive land development, public agency land managers, and planners and other government officials involved in comprehensive land use decisions and initiatives. The six workshops resulted in a total of 145 participants, an average of over 24 participants per workshop. Generally speaking representatives from the public agencies and the conservation organizations outnumbered representatives of the private sector and landowners.

The workshops were conducted at the following locations, dates and times.

### **SOUTH-CENTRAL PIEDMONT REGION**

Date: May 2, 2002

Location: Holiday Lake State Park – 4H Center, Appomattox, VA

Watersheds: Middle James, Roanoke and Upper Chowan Rivers

Eco-region: Central Piedmont

**Planning Districts:** (PDC11): Counties: Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Campbell; Cities: Bedford, Lynchburg (PDC 12) Counties: Franklin, Henry, Patrick, Pittsylvania; Cities: Danville, Martinsville. (PDC 13) Counties: Brunswick, Halifax, and Mecklenburg. (PDC 14) Counties: Amelia, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Lunenburg, Nottoway, Prince Edward



## **TIDEWATER REGION**

Date: May 7, 2002

Location: Hampton Roads PDC Office, Chesapeake, VA

Watersheds: Lower James, Chowan/ Albemarle Sound and Eastern Shore

Eco-region: Mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain

**Planning Districts:** (PDC 19) Counties: Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Greensville, Prince George, Surrey, Sussex; City of Petersburg. (PDC 22) Counties: Accomack, Northampton. (PDC 23) Counties: Isle of Wight, James City, Southampton, York; Cities: Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, Williamsburg

## **NORTHERN PIEDMONT REGION**

Date: May 21, 2002

Location: Lord Fairfax Community College, Warrenton, VA

Watersheds: Middle Potomac, Upper Rappahannock, Middle James Rivers

Eco-region: Northern Piedmont

**Planning Districts:** (PDC 8) Counties: Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William; Cities: Alexandria, Falls Church, Fairfax, Manassas, Manassas Park. (PDC 9) Counties: Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange, and Rappahannock. (PDC 10) Counties: Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Nelson; Cities: Charlottesville

## **SHENANDOAH VALLEY REGION**

Date: May 23, 2002

Location: Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, Harrisonburg, VA

Watersheds: Shenandoah / Potomac, Upper James and Roanoke Rivers

Eco-region: Central Appalachian Forest

**Planning Districts:** (PDC 5) Counties: Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, Roanoke; Cities: Clifton Forge, Covington, Roanoke, Salem. (PDC 6) Counties: Bath, Rockbridge, Rockingham, Highland, Augusta; Cities: Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, Waynesboro. (PDC 7) Counties: Clarke, Frederick, Page, Shenandoah, Warren; City of Winchester

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

Date: June 4, 2002;

Location: Hungry Mother State Park, Marion, VA

Watersheds: New River, Big Sandy, Clinch, Powell, Holston/Upper Tennessee Rivers

Eco-region: Cumberland/Southern Ridge and Valley

**Planning Districts:** (PDC 1) Counties: Lee, Wise, Scott; City of Norton. (PDC 2) Counties: Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell. (PDC 3) Counties: Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Washington, Wythe; Cities/Towns: Bristol, Galax. Abingdon, Marion, Wytheville. (PDC 4) Counties: Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski; Cities/Towns: Radford, Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Pulaski

## THE PENINSULAS REGION

Date: June 6, 2002

Location: Salem Church Library, Fredericksburg

Watersheds: Lower Potomac, Lower Rappahannock, Lower James and York River

Eco-region: Mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain

**Planning Districts:** (PDC 15) Counties: Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, Powhatan; City of Richmond (PDC 16) Counties: Caroline, King George, Spotsylvania, Stafford. (PDC 17) Counties: Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland. (PDC 18) Counties: Essex, Gloucester, King & Queen, King William, Mathews, and Middlesex

Participants were asked to come prepared to discuss a variety of questions including: Which lands and features that define the character of your area; Which lands are currently protected and likely to always be a part of the community; Which lands or features might be lost; Among those that might be lost, which are critical to your community and the region; What alternative ways and means exist that might allow the community to conserve key resources; What organizations exist in your community that may be able to lead efforts to conserve valuable lands or features; and What resources are needed to accomplish these actions?

The workshops asked the same basic questions and followed the agenda shown below.

## WORKSHOP AGENDA

### 8:30 am Registration

### 9:00 am Plenary Session

- Welcome – *Visioning the Future of Virginia's Environment II*
- *The Regional Perspective*
- Linking Lands and Resources
  - The Commonwealth's Conservation Landscape
  - Conservation Partners and Planning Resources
  - Land Conservation Opportunities
- The Workshop Process

### 10:15 am Breakout Session #1: Assessing the Local and Regional Status of Land Conservation

Meet with Planning District Commission Partners to:

- Identify Land Conservation Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats locally and within PDC
  - ecological resources; cultural and historic resources; agricultural and forestal resources
  - organizational capacity; leadership

### 11:45 am Lunch

- Conservation Partnership Success Stories

### 12:45 pm Breakout Session #2: Setting Land Conservation Priorities and Goals

- Identify regional priorities for land conservation
- Conceptually map identified priority resources

### 2:15 pm Break

**2:30 pm Reporting Out**

- Each PDC Group Describes Their Land Conservation Priorities and Needs

**2:50 pm Breakout Session #3 – Strategies and Responsible Parties**

- Identify preferred strategies
- Identify who will pursue what actions and follow-on communication channels

**3:45 pm Summing Up****4:00 pm Adjourn**

After the plenary sessions, which featured notable speakers from the region discussing land conservation initiatives, the participants went to “Break-Out” sessions that allowed them to work in groups of participants from the same PDC. On occasion, when there was insufficient attendance from one PDC the groups were combined and asked to look at the priorities for both PDCs.

The information provided in this Report is “interpreted” and represents the consultant’s best efforts to translate the intent behind the comments..

The Report contains an Executive Summary of the Interpreted Findings, which provides an overview of the major priorities and strategies that were developed in the workshops. The Executive Summary is followed by a workshop-by-workshop presentation of results by each of the PDCs. The results are presented in numerical order starting with PDC 1 and proceeding to PDC 23.

## **Executive Summary of Interpreted Findings**

Judging by the interest and enthusiasm of the participants at these workshops the drive for sound land conservation practices in Virginia is alive and well. As was expected, many participants enthusiastically represented public and private land conservation and management entities and the various issues they deal with in developing areas of the State. Less expected were the number of participants who were landowners and small community leaders who sought to retain or develop the economic viability of their community without losing its character. The consultants were left with an overall optimism that Virginia can prosper in the future without forfeiting the natural and cultural heritage that makes the State unique. Perhaps of greater importance, participants currently are working, and are prepared to continue working to achieve this vision. They, neither expect others to do it for them, nor expect the State to infuse the efforts with enormous sums of money. They cannot, however, do it without some assistance.

The workshops resulted in almost a consensus of the top priorities and strategies for facilitating land conservation efforts in Virginia. Almost all of the specific priorities identified in the workshops fall into one of the categories listed below.

### **Priorities**

#### **1. Corridors:**

A consistent priority among the workshops was the designation and protection of the corridors and their related resources. Whether greenways, blueways, trails, rivers, or highways and byways, the participants were interested in mitigating impacts or buffering the corridors from future impacts.

Frequently the driving force behind conserving waterways and their adjacent riparian habitats was first, for protecting water quality and second, for its recreational and experiential value. Some envisioned greenway trails, with connecting links to major resources, others simply envisioned being able to swim, fish or canoe the rivers and assurances that they had a safe supply of drinking water.

Participants seeking improved trails focused on transportation and recreational values, while those voting to protect the highways and byways were more concerned with the impact change might have in the overall character of their community and region. An associated priority was the protection of scenic views from and into the corridors. These folks believed that significant and repetitive views of development from corridors would diminish the experience.

## **2. Farms and Forests**

In all of the regions the protection and retention of private agricultural and forested lands were considered important. In all but the most urbanized areas they were among the top priority. Many participants saw these lands as integral to the character of their community. They were not satisfied with the prospect that the farms and forests would become museum pieces, but sought to identify ways and means to make them economically viable components of their communities. Some proponents of the forested lands envisioned a statewide commitment to sustainable forest practices for both public and private forested lands.

## **3. Natural Areas**

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Natural Heritage Program has identified a significant number of environmentally sensitive lands that need to be protected. In addition, private non-profit groups such as The Nature Conservancy have also identified important natural areas that need conservation. Workshop participants were unanimously supportive of the programs to identify and protect these resources. Others argued for and won support for the concepts of protecting large undeveloped tracts of natural lands to retain biological diversity and character of their regions.

## **4. Historic Resources**

As with the natural areas, workshop participants consistently identified significant historic places, events, personages, landscapes and archeological sites as being important to protect from loss to the community. Efforts were envisioned where the land trusts would use conservation measures to buffer the existing historical properties as well as recognizing the need to set aside additional properties that are currently unprotected.

## **Strategies**

As one can easily imagine the number of deserving projects from even on region could quickly overwhelm the resources available locally, statewide and nationally. Many Participants have been involved in land conservation efforts for years if not their entire lifetime and they are not expecting miracles. On the contrary they understand that it will require a lot of hard work to realize even a portion of their goals. However they are seeking some reasonable assistance from all of the active participants including both public and private federal, state, regional, local entities. The following strategies represent a consensus belief in what resources are needed to make achieving the goals possible.

## **1. Development of a Virginia Land Conservation Model System**

With thousands of priorities there is no systematic method for determining where the available resources should be focused or distributed. Other states have developed models and statewide systems that allow them to use their financial and in-kind services most effectively and empower and support regional and local leaders to work toward their own goals as well as the statewide system goals. It is akin to the management process of seeking to improve 1000 things by one percent rather than seeking a 1000% improvement in one thing. Such a system would enable the parties to take greatest advantage of the resources that are or might be available and distribute the work effort to the numerous willing volunteers and community workers.

It has been recently suggested that Virginia should acquire or otherwise protect over 500,000 acres in the next five years. From a State perspective this is an overwhelming task. Yet if it is seen from the perspective of 100,000 acres per year, 5,000 acres per PDC, or 1000 acres per county it no longer seems as overwhelming. A Virginia Land Conservation Model System would place many more goals in reach with fewer resources needed to achieve them.

## **2. Education**

Another strategy that was included in all of the workshops was a concerted effort to provide education about land conservation methods and practices in Virginia and elsewhere. Some sought to focus the education efforts on public managers and officials to gain support for the efforts. Others emphasized the need for landowners to understand their options. Still others believed that educational efforts should be integrated into the schools for future generation understanding of the issues. All are important and they can be facilitated by development of consistent educational materials that convey the same messages to all parties.

## **3. Land Trust Roles**

Since these workshops are designed to identify priorities that have an explicit role for the land trusts it was gratifying to find that all workshops saw a significant role for private land trusts in the realization of their land conservation goals. Some regions had active land trusts, while other had none, but they all were interested in the potential benefits of having local land trusts with local individuals playing a visible and vital leadership role from the private perspective. Participants also believed that land trusts could play a role in improving communications between conservation organizations and efforts.

## **4. Economic Viability**

Participants were extremely conscious that they are too often painted with a broad brush as being against development. They took great exception to the fact that by opposing sprawl and other costly and failed land use practices that they were automatically perceived as anti-development. All of the workshops had discussions about ways and means of participating in comprehensive and land use planning and zoning decisions so they could help shape future plans and avoid negative impacts to their communities through the granting of plan and zoning exceptions or inconsistent enforcement of regulations.

In addition participants recognized that wishing for the retention of agricultural and forested lands would not make it so. They actively sought ways and means of creating economically viable strategies for the private farms and forested lands. While these efforts may require action by the state or federal governments there were numerous participants committed to identifying supporting programs that will enable farms and forests to survive economically.

## 5. Funding

As might be expected, the one strategy that ranked first on everyone's list was a stable and dedicated source of funding for these land conservation initiatives. Participants were not greedy. They recognized the existing financial condition of the state and the difficulties associated with getting any reasonable source of funds. Participants were appreciative of existing state efforts to find funding through bond referenda and other measures. However, they were also quite creative in identifying possible sources of funding that could be used to support land conservation efforts at the state, regional and local levels.

In many instances participants also sought adequate funding for the state agencies that manage lands and suggested ways that funding could be assured to manage lands acquired as part of the land conservation efforts

## Conclusion

The Virginia Outdoors Plan was comprehensive in its efforts to identify projects at the state, regional and local level that would have a positive impact on Virginia's land conservation efforts. Yet, as comprehensive as it was, this document expands the land conservation projects into the private sector and identifies numerous projects that complement or supplement the VOP projects. No one expects the state to complete all of the VOP projects on its own. Regional and local agencies can do their part, and with these workshop results and completion of the Land Trust Strategic Plan the private sector is poised to take more concerted action toward the goal of linking lands and conserving Virginia's green heritage.

## Individual PDC Findings

### Workshop Five: The Southwest Region

**Setting:** Workshop 5 was held at Hungry Mother State Park on Tuesday June 4, 2002. The workshop invitees included parties from PDCs 1 LEONOWISCO; 2 -- Cumberland Plateau; 3 — Mount Rogers; and 4 — New River Valley. No participants came from LEONOWISCO PDC so they were combined in a session with Cumberland Plateau PDC. Due to the low number of participants from PDCs 3 and 4 they were combined for the data-gathering phase of the workshop.

#### PDC 1 – LEONOWISCO and PDC 2 – Cumberland Plateau

This work group focused on the need to conserve agricultural lands, steep slopes, and stream valley corridors to retain the character of the their region. In priority order the following areas were considered the most important and the most likely to be lost in ensuing years.

**1. Upchurch Tract:** The Upchurch Tract is a privately owned area of several thousand acres. It features steeply sided slopes in the upper reaches of the mountain and is slated by the owners for development. Many including the County officials do not believe it can be developed so that it will become an asset. Workshop participants felt the following were necessary:

- Find a coordinator or point person to lead the challenge for better development or no development
- Find funding/partners and try to purchase the property perhaps in conjunction with the Nature conservancy or by using a County bond referendum

- Try to determine what the owners would accept as a reasonable price of the property. The owners have rejected offers based on appraisals that considered local constraints.
- The County has a number of residents who strongly support green issues. Try to recruit those residents into the cause.

**2-4. Agricultural Heritage:** Priority 2, the Thompson Valley Agricultural area, Priority 3, the Burke's Garden area and Priority 4, the Elk Garden Area

These individual areas all feature an agricultural economy that is threatened by a number of economic realities. Farms are slowly and grudgingly being turned into other developments for a variety of reasons. The workshop participants were interested in reversing those trends and finding economically viable ways to retain the agricultural character of the community. Ideas for this initiative include:

- Ensuring that farm owners were aware of the options to use easements or sales of development rights to improve the farm economics. This includes holding public information sessions.
- Enlisting the Farm Bureau, Extension Service, Soil and Water conservation Districts and others into efforts to inform farmers of their options and seek ways and means of improving economic viability.
- Invite groups such as the Farmland trust to conduct meetings in the areas
- Seeking out key local contacts in the area farming communities to develop word of mouth support for conservation initiatives.
- Identify Eco-tourism opportunities and develop strategies for utilizing these to improve economic viability of the farming communities.

**5. Little River and Maiden Springs:** Little River and Maiden Springs represent among the more pristine of natural habitats in the region. Efforts should be made to obtain easements along and near these resources to retain their natural quality.

### **PDC 3 — Mount Rogers**

This group focused on a couple of specific areas where easements were believed to be necessary to retain the natural character of the land and facilities. In addition they supported the recommendations in the Virginia Outdoors Plan for new designation and conservation of natural heritage sites, scenic rivers, trails, greenways and development of the New River Trail. The priorities included:

- 1. Appalachian Trail Corridor from Round Mountain to Crawfish Valley:** Obtaining additional easements to preserve scenic views and reduce developmental encroachment along the Appalachian Trail Corridor from Round Mountain to Crawfish Valley
- 2. VOP Natural Heritage sites:** Support for the recommendations stated in the VOP concerning Natural Heritage sites identified for the PDC.
- 3. Piney Creek/ Big Springs Bogs:** Identification of Piney Creek/ Big Springs Bogs as an additional area to be conserved that was not included in the VOP



**4. VOP Virginia Scenic Rivers:** Designation of local Virginia Scenic Rivers in VOP (Recommendations 8-17) and the need to provide easement support for these designations.

**5. VOP Highways and Byways:** Designation and thematic development of PDC highways and byways as identified in the VOP (Recommendations 18-25)

**6. VOP Trails and Greenways:** Development of connector trails, bikeways, the New River Canoe Trail and appropriate signage of routes as identified in the VOP (Recommendations 26-31)

## **PDC 4 — New River Valley**

Since most of the participants in this group were from the New River Valley District they were more specific in developing the priorities and strategies for the resources they wished to conserve. The discussions resulted in the following:

**1. Appalachian Trail Through Pearisburg, VA:** One of the Appalachian Trail's critical connecting points between public lands runs through Pearisburg, VA. This corridor needs easements and other land conservation efforts by federal, state and local entities in order to retain the character and experience of the Trail.

- Possible participants in conservation efforts include the US Forest service, National Park Service, and the Appalachian Trail Conference
- Critical resource needs for this effort include obtaining or researching scientific information that can be used to educate the public
- Obtain funding for conservation initiatives
- Identify a local Agency and/or individual to lead project efforts
- Approach VDOT to ensure their understanding and potential role in the conservation initiatives
- Make use of Southwings, an environmental pilots organization that can aid in educating officials and others about the issues.
- Meet with private landowners who have a role in conservation initiatives and adapt the conservation strategies to their needs.
- Identify possible mediators, related issues and develop information packages that address mitigation issues
- Either find a local land trust that is interested in the project or create one that can be a vehicle for implementing the conservation initiatives.

**2. New River Trail and Blueway:** The group supported efforts to enhance the New River trail and the proposed Blueway or canoe trail. Primary considerations included a dedicated and stable source of funding and the need to make improvements to the Whit Riverbend Park as a service location along the canoe trail.

**3. I-81 & 460 Corridors:** Major concerns were expressed by the workgroup regarding the planning, zoning and overall development philosophy of the I-81 & 460 corridors. Strategies included

- Seeking T-21 grants from VDOT for developing trail systems that will offer mitigating alternatives to continued development of the area



- Development of a model ordinance for use by the counties as they attempt to address I-81 development issues and pressures.
- Seeking alternatives to widening I-81 such as rail components
- Make a proactive contact with the commonwealth Transportation Board to discuss the development issues in the corridor and how the area can maintain some semblance of natural character into the future.

#### **4. Conservation of the Elliston Straightaway**

**5. VOP Natural Heritage Sites:** The group supports the designation and protection of the DCR Natural Heritage sites identified through the VOP. Strategies included:

- Support for funding to implement the VOP plans and to enable local interests to obtain easements that will provide buffers to the sites
- Work with DNR to identify sites and determine what can be done at the local or private level.

### **Workshop Four: Shenandoah Valley Region**

**Setting:** Workshop 4. was held at the Mennonite Retirement Center in Harrisonburg, VA on Thursday, May 23, 2002. The workshop invitees included parties from PDCs 5 — Roanoke Valley - Alleghany; 6 - - Central Shenandoah; and 7 — Northern Shenandoah. Few participants came from PDC 5 so they were combined in a session with the Central Shenandoah PDC. PDC 7 had plenty of participants and conducted their workgroup session. The PDC 5 and 6 workgroup developed priorities for teach PDC and then generically focused on resources and strategies for both sets of priorities.

#### **PDC 5 — Roanoke Valley - Alleghany**

The work group established separate priorities for PDC 5 and PDC 6. The group's emphasis for PDC 5 was on unbroken expanses of forests, conservation of the western slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains, scenic protection of the Blue Ridge Parkway and natural sites and riparian lands. Priorities included:

- 1. Buchanan/Purgatory Mountain:** Much of the Buchanan/Purgatory Mountain has been in private hands and not been timbered. It has recently sold for possible timber harvest. Initiatives would focus on trying to retain the uncut expanse of forest.
- 2. Unbroken forest on Poor Mountain:** Unbroken forest on Poor Mountain is also related to the interest in retaining large expanses of forest for natural and ecological values.
- 3. Western Edge of Blue Ridge Mountains:** The western edge of Blue Ridge Mountains represent a scenic vista issue from numerous locations in the valley and need easements to reduce development pressures.
- 4. VOP Natural Heritage Sites:** The groups ranking tied on the need to designate and protect the Natural Heritage sites identified in the VOP
- 4. Blue Ridge Parkway Scenic Views and Adjacent Lands:** The tying initiative is the effort to conserve Blue Ridge Parkway scenic views and adjacent lands as seen from the Parkway.
- 5. Riparian Lands on the North and South Forks of the Roanoke River:** The group identified the need to obtain easements along the riparian lands on the North and South forks of the Roanoke River.

## **PDC 6 — Central Shenandoah**

The group covered a variety of resources emphasizing the need to conserve or enhance the protections for National Parks, forests, heritage sites, agricultural lands, Civil War Battlefields and steep terrain within the city limits of Staunton. Priorities were as follows:

- 1. Lands Adjacent to Shenandoah National Park:** Obtain scenic or development rights easements for lands adjacent to Shenandoah National Park
- 2. VOP Natural Heritage Sites:** Support the designation and protection of the Natural Heritage sites identified in the VOP
- 2. Agricultural Lands Along Dry Run, Route 252 and Point Republic:** Seek ways and means of conserving agricultural lands along Dry Run, Route 252 and Point Republic in order to retain the agricultural character of the area
- 3. George Washington Forest to Shenandoah National Park:** Take steps to protect and George Washington Forest to Shenandoah National Park link at Afton where it crosses private lands that may be subject to development
- 4. Valley Battlefields (3):** The battlefields are largely protected but there are adjacent lands to the Valley Battlefields (3) that would provide greater protection if they could be held in easements.
- 5. East Side of Staunton:** The east side of Staunton has some steep and naturally significant features that should be conserved through easements and planning initiatives

**Resources Needed:** In order to address these priorities the following resources are needed in the regions.

- A dedicated and stable source of funding such as a General Obligation Bond recordation taxes, tipping fees, and authorization for other local sources of fees and revenues
- Understanding and access to the US Corps of engineers and TNC Wetlands Restoration Trust Fund
- Investigation of the potential for accessing the Forest legacy program
- Development of a statewide Farmland Protection Program
- Larger amounts and more reliable funding from Virginia Land and water conservation Fund

**Strategies** that may help in conserving these priorities include:

- Ensure that funding for initiatives includes staff time to implement the initiatives
- Identify and utilize existing networks and organizations of people that have similar interests
- Develop media plans to obtain coverage for initiatives. This may include seeking notables who are willing to champion the cause
- Create and support a speaker's bureau by identifying potential speakers and producing materials for their use
- Develop presentations and course materials that will be used in the schools
- Arrange and plan flyovers of critical conservation projects for local officials and others who will make decisions on the project; Flyovers can be provided by Southwings
- Obtain historic photos and maps to show the impact of local land use changes
- Identify and gain support from local leadership
- Develop plans and strategies that foster agricultural vitality.

## PDC 7 — Northern Shenandoah

The work group developed resource tools and strategies for all of the priorities together. They are indicated below. This work group was varied in its priorities emphasizing the conservation of agricultural lands, Civil War Battlefields, scenic highways and wildlife corridors. The priorities include:

- 1. Farm land protection along the Route 340 corridor in Page County:** The purchase of easement and development rights for farms in the Route 340 corridor of Page county to protect the agricultural character of the region and make farming operations more economically viable
- 2. Land Protection for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Winchester Battle including Redbud Run, US route 11 north of Winchester and Millburn Road Historic district:** The 3<sup>rd</sup> Winchester Battlefield has been designated and protected but does not provide complete protection for ancillary sights and scenic easements that impact the visitor experience
- 3. Designate portion of Route 340 as scenic highway in Page, Warren and Clarke Counties:** Portions of Route 340 in the three counties can be conserved with scenic easements if the route is designated as a scenic highway.
- 4. Protect Overall Run and related Civil War Battlefield sites:** Easements are needed to protect the riparian buffers along Overall Run and sites where Civil War skirmishes took place
- 5. Overall Run Wildlife Corridor at the Page and Warren County Line:** Efforts are needed to conserve the existing wildlife corridor along Overall Run where it intersects with roadways and developments at the Page and Warren County lines

### Resources Needed

- A dedicated and stable source of funding from the state and local governments for funding PDR's, TDR's, easements and fee purchases. This may include supporting additional property tax abatements for conservation or developing an emergency revolving fund to secure threatened conservation properties
- Planning Tools including state and local PDR's authority, TDR authority, development and effective enforcement of local zoning and subdivision ordinances, and promotion of watershed management planning and low impact development principles
- Support George Washington National Forest protection protocols to conserve the National forest areas in the region

### Strategies

- Identify conservation priorities at the county level. This may include a "sacred places" open space visioning process
- Coordinate the various interest groups for more political clout. The organization would support local and regional community based planning, local government funding sources, a PDC campaign for extended scenic Highway designation, and RC&D application for the 3 SWCD in this area
- Support and enable watershed groups to leverage federal and state dollars to the area
- Conduct and education campaign for linking H2O quantity and quality to I. U. CMS. Planning
- Encourage conservation effort coordination by VaULT
- Support efforts to ease the Dillon Rule as it relates to fostering land conservation strategies

## Workshop Three: Northern Piedmont Region

**Setting:** Workshop 3 was held at the Lord Fairfax Community College, Warrenton, VA on Tuesday, May 21, 2002. The workshop invitees included parties from PDC's 8 — Northern Virginia; 9 - - Rappahannock - Rapidan; and 10 — Thomas Jefferson. The sessions were all well attended and representatives from each district provided lists of priorities and their thoughts on resource needs and strategies. The results from each group session are listed below in numerical order.

### PDC 8 — Northern Virginia

The participants from PDC 8 listed their priorities for projects found in the Virginia Outdoors Plan and included a separate listing of priorities for opportunities that were not listed in the VOP. The group emphasized the purchase of easements to buffer existing protected sites, identification and conservation of specific sites known to have significant conservation values and the need for making connections to existing trails and greenways. The resources and strategies listed for this PDC apply to all of the priorities. The priorities are as follows:

#### Land Trust Priorities from the VOP list

- 1. Buffer the Regional Parks and trail links:** Obtain easements and purchases that will buffer the Regional Parks and provide for trail links to the parks
- 2. Easements along Potomac Heritage National Scenic trail:** Seek to obtain easements along the route of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic trail in order to retain the character of the lands through which it passes.
- 3. Expand and buffer Bull Run Mt. 2500 Acre natural area:** Bull Run Mt. 2500 Acre natural area has been recently dedicated and needs additional lands and protection through purchase and easements.
- 4. The W&OD trail and connecting greenways:** Easements are needed along the W&OD trail and connecting greenways; both for trail and natural resources buffering

#### Land Trust Opportunities not in the VOP

- 1. Potomac River front in Loudoun and Fairfax:** Obtain easements along the Potomac River front in Loudoun and Fairfax for scenic and water quality.
- 2. Goose Creek watershed:** Conservation easements are needed in the riparian buffers along the Goose Creek watershed to protect water quality and ecological health of the corridor that is subject to heavy development.
- 3. Fairfax County Stream Valley Corridors:** Enhance the existing trails and greenway systems in Fairfax County by linking and connecting trails and greenways throughout the Fairfax County stream valley corridors

#### Resources Needed

- Need to develop a comprehensive Regional Natural Resource Inventory that includes GIS mapping of the natural resources and assessment of the current ecological health of the resource types.
- A mechanism is needed to allow sharing of conservation easements/protection information among land trusts and local and regional governments

- A stable dedicated source of funding is needed from state and local jurisdictions including more dollars for restoration (Riparian), for land trusts easement and acquisition, and funding assistance for the management of acquired lands
- Local government should have the land use authority to adequately plan, zone and manage the development and growth of their jurisdictions

### **Strategies**

- VaULT should take a leadership role in generating a coordinated plan for land conservation in Virginia
- A regional approach to planning for land conservation is needed. It should be across jurisdictions including Maryland. The region needs to define its conservation goals and seek public buy-in. (CBF 2000 etc.). The region can use GIS to identify target properties
- A targeted public information and outreach/education effort should be made for target properties. It can begin with schools and parents, but should also create a speaker's bureau to reach a wider audience
- Emphasize the synergies of involving multi agency partners on specific projects/properties, the use of public/private partnerships and engage federal partners. A VaULT/Federal land manager meeting could facilitate this
- Seek more incentives to enhance cooperation between trusts and landowners such as fast track land-use and resources authority
- This might be in the form of more authority to the Northern Virginia Regional Council

## **PDC 9 — Rappahannock-Rapidan**

This work group took a slightly different approach identifying general locations and emphasizing resources within them. Also included were a focus on trails, scenic highways and historic districts. The resources needed and the strategies applied to all priorities.

### **1. South Fauquier Area Resources including:**

- Conservation of agricultural areas along Route 28 corridor;
- Protections for Melrose Castle; Casanova Hunt country and Auburn Mills;
- Retention and protection of the Remington, VA Cycling route;
- Stabilization and conservation of the Liberty, Goldvein and Franklin mine sites;
- Protection of buffers along Elk Run; and
- Conservation of the Warrenton spur of the Rappahannock canal.

**2. Trail Connections:** The group placed a high priority on acquiring and providing links to Manassas Gap, Crooked Run Valley, Gap Run Valley, Fleetwood and Avoka State Forests, and Sky Meadows State Park

**3. Rappahannock River:** Emphasis for the Rappahannock River Riparian Corridor from Kelly's Ford to Phelps Wildlife Management Area, and City of Fredericksburg is the retention of an uninterrupted continuous stretch of river that does not have access points and provides users with a near wilderness experience.

**4. Route 15 corridor from Culpepper to Mt Pony:** The group proposes scenic highway designation for this portion of the Route 15 corridor which may also need some easement acquisition to protect the character of the drive.

**5. Sperryville to Montpelier, Route 231 corridor:** Scenic highway designation and selected easement acquisition is needed for this portion of the highway.

**5. Protection of the Madison-Barbour Historic District:** Further designation and appropriate easements are needed to conserve the resources associated with the Madison-Barbour Historic District this includes Montpelier, Hampstead Archeological District, and the Southwest Mountains.

### **Resources Needed**

- A stable and dedicated source of funding for land conservation efforts
- Stronger regional coordination between the PDC's and local governments
- A mechanism to focus scarce state resources on the priority needs
- Examine and evaluate the missions, roles and responsibilities to ensure they have a focus on land conservation.
- Designation of a lead agency to coordinate agency and others efforts in land conservation so as to create a balanced program
- Need a technical assistance group for land conservation – VOF does help

### **Strategies**

- Obtain funding for projects by creating and earmarking tax revenues to fund actions; and obtaining matching funds from state and federal sources.
- Identify the corridors to be protected; identify the threats to corridors; determine the best method for mitigating the threats and use the hunt clubs to aid in their conservation
- Develop presentations to educate planning/BOS folks, the public and landowners about conservation opportunities and values
- Raise land conservation issues with local legislators
- Create more information sharing and positive relations among land trusts, NGOs and Government
- Implement county PDR programs including donated conservation easements

### **PDC 10 — Thomas Jefferson**

This work group developed a specific list of land conservation priorities for opportunities not in the Virginia Outdoors Plan and a second specific list for those actions included in the VOP recommendations. The two lists are as follows:

#### **Land Trust Opportunities Not in VOP**

**1. East Slope Blue Ridge Mountains:** Obtain easements and lands that conserve the view sheds and scenic views along the east slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains

**2. Southwest Mountains in Albemarle County:** Seek land conservation measures that will help conserve the natural character of the Southwest Mountains in Albemarle County

**3. Rock Fish River Valley in Nelson Co.:** Obtain easements to protect the riparian corridor of the Rock Fish River Valley in Nelson Co.

**4. South Fork of Rivanna River in Albemarle Co. and Main Rivanna River in Fluvanna County:** Obtain easements to protect the riparian corridor of the South fork of Rivanna River in Albemarle Co. and the Main Rivanna River in Fluvanna County.

**5. Viewshed of Highway 29:** Protect selected views from the Highway 29 corridor between Culpeper and Lynchburg

**6. Large Farms Adjacent to Rapidan in Greene/Madison/Orange Counties:** Utilize land conservation and economic vitality measures to retain the agricultural character of the farms adjacent to Rapidan in Greene/Madison/Orange Counties

**7. Green Springs Historic Area in Louisa County:** Utilize historic designations and easements to protect the Green Springs Historic Area in Louisa County

**7. Buck Mountain Creek in Albemarle Co.:** Conserve the Buck Mountain Creek in Albemarle Co. to retain the natural character of the corridor and protect water quality

**9. North Anna Forest in Louisa Co.:** Obtain easements and acquire lands to reduce impacts and create buffers for the North Anna Forest in Louisa Co.

**9. Route 20 Charlottesville to Scottsville in Albemarle County:** Obtain easements to protect the scenic by way character of Route 20 Charlottesville to Scottsville in Albemarle County

### **Land Trust Opportunities in Virginia Outdoors Plan**

The following recommendations in the VOP were listed in priority order of importance for conservation. The numbers in parentheses are those recommendation numbers in the VOP

- Shenandoah National Park viewshed (1)
- Scenic Route 810 (18)
- Scenic Route 15 (17)
- Appalachian Trail (19)
- James River (13)
- South river (14)
- Rivanna River Trail (20)
- Holland House trail (27)
- Hardware River (15)

### **Resources Needed**

The work group determined the following resources were needed to address all of the priorities listed above.

- A stable and dedicated source of funding for land conservation efforts
- Additional land conservation tools such as Purchase Development Rights and Transfer Development Rights, and tax incentives for Agricultural and Forestal Districts
- Inventory and distribute resources data using Geographic Information Systems to create and manage the database.
- Develop Education/outreach materials and methods to generate public support for land conservation efforts
- Find adequate funding for state resource agencies and for stewardship management of acquired lands and leases.



### **Strategies**

- Develop cooperative projects with forestry industries
- Improve delivery and develop new applications for DOF and other agency databases/GIS
- Form Local Action groups and create templates and/or models of positive land conservation practices for action groups to use in initiating community-based conservation programs

## **Workshop One: South-Central Piedmont Region**

**Setting:** Workshop 1. was held at the Holiday Lakes State Park 4-H Center near Appomattox, VA on Thursday, May 2, 2002. The workshop invitees included parties from PDC's 11 – Central Virginia; 12 – West Piedmont; 13 – Southside; and 14 — Piedmont. The sessions for PDC 11 and 14 were well attended and treated individually by the session participants. Due to the number of participants from the Southside the participants from West Piedmont PDC 12 and Southside PDC 13 were combined.

The results from each group session are listed below in numerical order.

### **PDC 11 — Central Virginia**

This work group identified some general areas that they believed were important to pursue in order to implement sound land conservation measures in the region. The strategies relate to all of the priorities. The priorities include:

- 1. Preservation of existing farms:** This involves implementing various land conservation and economic viability strategies to enhance the likelihood that existing farms will be able to continue in operations.
- 2. Protection of watersheds around major rivers and associated parks:** Implement land conservation measures that will ensure that the waterways are fishable and swimmable (Clean and Healthy).
- 3. Shift emphasis of population growth to existing urban areas:** Enact land use planning measures that will prevent sprawl and encourage new developments in existing population centers.
- 4. Monacan Indian Lands Preservation:** Identify and target acquisition or easement protection of specific lands of significance to the Monacan Indian tribe
- 5. Preservation of Lands around Curtis Community:** Initiate land conservation and historic preservation measures that will enable the community to protect the character of the lands around Curtis Community.

### **Strategies**

- Protect watersheds around major rivers and associated Parks
- Promote sustainable forestry on public and private lands
- Emphasis on stormwater management
- Inventory and map rural historical highways and selected lands that preserve the character of the historical and scenic roads
- Decrease non-native vegetation in protected areas throughout the region



## **PDC 12 — West Piedmont; PDC 13 – Southside**

Due to the number of participants from the Southside PDC the same group of people reviewed both of these PDCs. The work group covered priorities for trails, agriculture, scenic roads and large tracts of forested lands. The strategies relate to all priorities. Priorities included:

- 1. Blue Ridge Parkway and Route 47 corridors:** Obtain scenic easements along the Blue Ridge Parkway and Route 47 corridors to preserve the view sheds and natural character of these corridors. This would also entail seeking scenic byways status for the Route 47 corridor.
- 2. Gaston**
- 3. Rails to Trails:** Obtain easements and land to expand the rails to trails in eastern Halifax and between Lawrenceville to Lacrosse
- 4. North and Central Halifax River Road area:** Initiate land conservation measures to protect the character of the North and Central Halifax River Road area particularly the agricultural lands
- 5. Large Timber Tracts:** Identify key lands needed to conserve large timber tracts in the region and explore easements for these properties.

### **Strategies**

- A stable and dedicated source of funding for land conservation efforts
- Inventory natural and cultural resources storing inventory on GIS and provide data through the PDC to local decision makers
- Identify local entities interested in land conservation and easements to act as a liaison with agencies and organizations (maybe PDC directors)
- Develop educational programs to increase public awareness of land conservation needs. This may include workshops with VOF and other state agencies or obtaining technical help to localities on Agricultural/Forestral Districts (A/FDs) and Purchase Development Rights (PDRs).
- Seek more effective zoning ordinances and incorporate the land conservation strategies into the Comprehensive Plan
- Seek a local land trust organization that can implement land conservation measures.
- Emphasize the need for more urban Parks and natural areas

## **PDC 14 — Piedmont**

This work group like the one for PDC 11, focused primarily on larger themes rather than specific sites. Emphasis for this group included agriculture, sprawl and open space, and water quality. The priorities include:

- 1. Viable Agricultural Industry:** Strategies need to focus on retaining the working farms and ensuring that they are economically viable
- 2. Targeted Development:** Ensure land use measures emphasize the targeting of development and the conservation of adequate open space.
- 3. Watershed Protection:** Develop land use practices and land conservation measures that protect and enhance water quality and protect the watersheds

**4. James River Corridor :** Obtain easements and acquire lands as necessary to retain the natural and cultural character of the James River Corridor including riparian lands and the river itself.

#### **Needs and Strategies**

- A stable and dedicated source of funding for land conservation efforts including adequate funding for the Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Develop education programs to educate everyone about land conservation needs, promote a collaborative effort, inform citizens about changing economics and farming practices and make all aware of beneficial options.
- Seek supportive zoning, effective land use measures and innovative methods of development to ensure that zoning and subdivision ordinances agree and consistent land use assessments.
- Develop strategies for niche markets that support agricultural related industries i.e. equipment dealers, feed, seed, etc.
- Become involved in comprehensive planning to envision a future of conserved land use.
- Develop and coordinate group efforts within Watersheds
- Maintain Best Management Practices in forestry to maintain the forest cover and develop monitoring programs for forests and water corridors to assess the success of the conservation efforts
- Develop or recruit land trusts who can get involved in area and implement private land conservation measures
- Identify and conserve the historic resources of the region

### **Workshop Six: The Peninsulas Region**

**Setting:** Workshop 6. was held at the Salem Church Library near Fredericksburg, VA on Thursday, June 6, 2002. The workshop invitees included parties from PDC's 15 – Richmond Regional; 16 - RADCO; 17 – Northern Neck; and 18 — Mid Peninsula. The sessions had representatives from each of the PDCs but the relatively low numbers for each PDC led to the combining of PDC's 15 and 16 into one group and PDC's 17 and 18 into another. Both groups addressed each PDC separately with some differences in the ways they approached the strategies. The results from each group session are listed below in numerical order.

#### **PDC 15 — Richmond Regional Priorities**

**1. Industrial Timberlands:** Land trust advocacy and outreach is needed to work with private timber companies such as those held by John Hancock, CFPC and International Paper to encourage sustainable forestry practices. This includes providing public input to management practices on public lands.

**2. Department of Corrections Lands on James River:** The Route 522 corridor is threatened by the potential for more prison development. Public efforts should focus on conserving these lands in an undeveloped state.

#### **3. Dinwiddie Quarry Battlefield**

**4. Route 711 Project in Powhatan County:** Both private and public entities should work with VDOT to address concerns about the Route 711 project in Powhatan County.

## PDC 16 – RADCO Priorities

**1. Quantico and AP Hill Military Bases:** Conservation efforts should focus on easements to create buffers for both Quantico and AP Hill Military Bases. Military resource managers should be included in efforts to protect selected natural areas on these bases.

### 2. Hopyard

**3. Fredericksburg Area Battlefields:** Obtain easements and control development to protect the Fredericksburg Area Battlefields beyond current lands.

**4. Mattaponi River:** Designate the entire corridor of the Mattaponi River as a scenic river and acquisition of easements to protect the riparian buffers along the entire Corridor.

## Resource Needs

- A stable and dedicated source of funding for land conservation efforts
- Better Education and outreach to citizens and elected officials
- A Northern Neck Land trust
- More Purchase Development Rights programs at the local levels
- Programs to keep Agri-business and Forestry viable in Virginia

## Strategies

- Communities need to create Open space Visions and Plans that promote Smart Growth, demonstrate the results of Sprawl, identify transportation alternatives, and show the dollar value of open space.
- Identify legislators and public officials who support conservation efforts and work with them on initiatives and strategies and educating others regarding land conservation.
- Identify “green” leaders, PRIs (Program related investments), conservation buyers and other networking opportunities to match priority properties with funding sources.
- Develop systems of communicating and coordinating between conservation organizations, identifying where land trusts are needed and help create them by providing the technical assistance to get a land trust started.
- Collaborate on public and private management of resources identified for conservation.

## PDC 17 – Northern Neck

This work group addressed both PDC 17 and PDC 18 in the same group. However, they kept both the districts separate in recommendations and did the strategies by priority. For these reasons they are presented separately in this document. The priorities for PDC 17 included:

**1. Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge:** Buffer and expand the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge through easements and targeted acquisitions to protect the natural resources of the refuge.

**2. Farmland/forestland Preservation:** Seek conservation measures and economic programs that will serve to retain the agricultural and forested character of the region.

**3. Cat Point Creek:** Acquire lands or easements that will protect Cat Point Creek and further protect the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge

**4. Housing/Growth Control:** Initiate actions that will result in effective land use controls and prevent sprawl and over development along the river bluffs.

**5. Corrotoman River (Lancaster):** Seek easements and other land conservation measures to protect the upper part of the Corrotoman River in Lancaster County.

**5. Potential State Park (Northumberland County):** The Virginia Outdoors Plan recommends the addition of a new State Park in Northumberland County. It should be given high priority and local efforts should focus on assisting in the process.

## **Strategies**

### **1. Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge**

- Contact Congressman Davis for support of conservation efforts
- Coordinate conservation efforts with Partners
- Make sure the refuge's protection is addressed in the county comprehensive Plan

### **2. Farmland/forestland Preservation**

- Need to create stronger more actively involved land trusts
- Promote development of the Virginia River Counties Strategic Plan
- Promote Local Agricultural Products and the need for funding of land conservation measures.

### **3. Cat Point Creek**

- Make acquisitions that will help protect the Rappahannock NWR
- Seek conservation measures to protect the water quality of Cat Point Creek

### **4. Housing/Growth Control**

- Develop programs and models to educate local officials about effective and advantageous land use practices.
- Initiate programs to educate the public, landowners and commercial and business leaders about the impact of future land use decisions on the quality of life in the district.

### **5. Corrotoman River (Lancaster)**

- Concentrate land use measures on the upper reaches of the Corrotoman River
- Initiate programs to educate the public, landowners and commercial and business leaders about the need for conservation measures to protect the river.

### **5. Potential State Park (Northumberland County)**

- The PDC should work with district officials to facilitate choosing a site for a potential state park in Northumberland County
- Inform the public and local officials about the importance of supporting the Fall 2002 park bond referendum which will impact the development of the new park.

## **PDC 18 – Mid Peninsula**

- 1. Dragon Run Watershed:** Support designation of the Dragon Run as a scenic river and develop a special area management plan for the entire watershed.
- 2. Middle Peninsula State Park:** The Virginia Outdoors Plan recommends the addition of a new State Park in Northumberland County. It should be given high priority and local efforts should focus on assisting in the process.
- 3. Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge:** Buffer and expand the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge through easements and targeted acquisitions to protect the natural resources of the refuge.
- 4. Piankatank to Bay Corridor:** Support the inclusion of the Piankatank River in its entirety as a scenic river and initiate land conservation measures to buffer the river.
- 5. Rappahannock River King George to Bay corridor:** Support the inclusion of the Rappahannock River from the Westmoreland/King George County line to the Bay as a scenic river and initiate land conservation measures to buffer the river in selected areas.
- 5. Farmland/forestland Preservation:** Seek conservation measures and economic programs that will serve to retain the agricultural and forested character of the region.

### **Strategies**

#### **1. Dragon Run Watershed**

- Identify stable dedicated funding sources to protect the river and provide for public access.
- Initiate a special area management plan for the watershed

#### **2. Middle Peninsula State Park**

- The PDC should work with district officials to facilitate choosing a site for a potential state park in Northumberland County
- Inform the public and local officials about the importance of supporting the Fall 2002 park bond referendum, which will impact the development of the new park.

#### **3. Rappahannock Refuge**

- Contact Congressman Davis for support of conservation efforts
- Coordinate conservation efforts with Partners
- Make sure the refuge's protection is addressed in the county comprehensive Plan

#### **4. Piankatank to Bay Corridor**

- Make use of existing or new land trusts to aid in conserving the corridor
- Identify and coordinate all interested parties to support conservation measures for the corridor
- The PDCs should work with all responsible parties to implement this initiative.

#### **5. Rappahannock River King George to Bay corridor**

- Make use of existing or new land trusts to aid in conserving the corridor
- Identify and coordinate all interested parties to support conservation measures for the corridor
- The PDCs should work with all responsible parties to implement this initiative.

## **5. Farmland/forestland Preservation**

- Need to create stronger more actively involved land trusts
- Promote development of the Virginia River Counties Strategic Plan
- Promote Local Agricultural Products and the need for funding of land conservation measures.

## **Workshop Two: The Tidewater Region**

**Setting:** Workshop 2 was held at the Hampton Roads PDC Office in Chesapeake, VA, on Tuesday, May 7, 2002. The workshop invitees included parties from PDC's 19 – Crater; 22 - Accomack Northampton; and 23 — Hampton Roads. The sessions had no representatives from PDC 19. The large number of participants from PDC 23 resulted in a splitting of that PDC into two separate groups indicated below by 23A and 23B. PDC 22 had a separate group. The results from each group session are listed below in numerical order.

### **PDC 19 – Crater (No Attendance)**

### **PDC 22 – Accomack Northampton**

- 1. Southern Tip of Eastern Shore:** Seek all appropriate means and conservation measures to protect the southern tip of the eastern shore which is a major bird migration route.
- 2. Route 13 Corridor:** Protect the lands along the Route 13 corridor South of Cape Charles, which contain the Exmore Ground Water recharge area a vital resource to the eastern shore.
- 3. Protect Critical Watersheds:** Protect critical watersheds including: Swan's Gut, Pitts Creek, Finney Creek, and the Machipongo River
- 4. Sustainable Integrated Resource Ind.** including Locustville and Routes 600/605/679
- 5. Recreation and Park Facilities:** Need County Recreation Parks for Accomack and Northampton Counties, a Bike trail from MD to Kiptopeke, and public access at Crystal Beach

### **Priorities**

- A stable and dedicated source of funding for land conservation efforts including the following possibilities:
  - Sales tax revenue sharing between the two counties
  - Explore a local gas tax
  - Congressional Appropriation
  - Support VLCF Funding
  - Explore Toll Dollars for conservation
  - Investigate the possibility of increased rental/lease or permit fees for VRMC
- Locate local community leaders and willing to develop a Land Trust
- Organize planning efforts that include:
  - Compiling and analyzing natural resource data on a watershed basis for prioritization of acquisition and protection

- Developing county recreation plans including a citizen survey
- Developing local PDR programs
- Consider Bay Act encroachments mitigated offsite at targeted resource areas
- Initiate a government relations effort designed to educate about the need for conservation measures in the District. This may include hosting a local leader/land trust workshop meeting.
- Seek designation of a National Scenic Highway

## **PDC 23 – Hampton Roads**

### **Group 23A Priorities**

- 1. Nesting/migratory Bird Habitat:** Use land conservation measures and processes to identify and protect nesting/migratory bird habitat
- 2. Riparian Buffers:** Obtain easements and use other measures to protect the riparian buffers in the District
- 3. Parks and Recreation Facilities:** Support the addition and acquisition of Parks, Recreation and Open Space including identifying suitable sites for Facilities and controlled access to natural areas.
- 4. Preservation of Rare and Unusual Forests:** Identify and use available conservation measures to preserve rare and unusual forests
- 5. Protection of Rivers in the PDC:** Seek regulations, enforcement and conservation measures including Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect the water quality and biological health of the District's rivers

### **Strategies**

- A stable and dedicated source of funding for land conservation efforts
- Better Education and outreach to citizens and elected officials
- Start a Hampton Roads Land Trust
- Combine state lands that use a similar management approach for multiple users
- Appropriate adequate funding for operations and staffing of public lands
- Develop a forest stewardship program aimed at gaining public support for appropriate management of forest types and the implementation of BMPs on agriculture and forested lands in urban areas.
- Seek to expand local conservation measures that can be used to protect resources. these may include:
  - Establish PDRs
  - Create an agricultural reserve program for the PDC
  - Investigate riparian Buffer Tax Credits
  - Develop other tax credit programs
  - Capital gains tax breaks for gift or sale of land at less than market value
  - Tax incentives to encourage eco-tourism businesses
  - Implement tax breaks for performance of BMPs
  - Incentives for landowners to maintain property complementary to Comprehensive Plan



- Develop plans by watershed with emphasis on local perspective and recognition of the overlap of goals and objectives. Plans should seek to:
  - Improve communication between municipalities
  - Identify and designate resources and the values of resources
  - Locate wetlands mitigation sites in priority areas
  - Study the groundwater recharge capacity at varying development densities to help determine development areas and priorities
  - Provide for alternative transportation measures
  - Define and facilitate livable communities
  - Identify and protect agricultural byways; and
  - Include conservation of open space as part of any capital improvement programs
  - Make information available on priority conservation lands
- Develop environmental education and interpretive strategies to ensure the public understands the value of effective land use planning and conservation efforts. These may include:
  - Developing interpretive centers like the gateways for the National Park Service
  - The Audubon society is looking for places to locate Environmental Education centers across the US in urban areas.
  - Change Virginia School Standards Of Learning to address conservation
  - Target populations for environmental education that include businesses, commercial districts, city residents and landowners.
  - Grant funding to high schools with conservation and natural resource programs (similar to the history programs)
  - Expand citizen's monitoring programs by watershed
- Lynnhaven River/Corps of engineers habitat restoration project should be expanded to include lands in private ownership.

### **Group 23B Priorities**

- 1. Protect Prime Agricultural Land and Open Space:** Support Agricultural Reserve Program to protect prime agricultural land and open space and to encourage organic and sustainable farming.
- 2. Scenic and Ecological Protection of Waterways:** Obtain easements and see land use controls to provide scenic and ecological protection of waterways
- 3. No Net Loss of Tidal and Non-Tidal Wetlands in PDC 23:** Establish the goal of no net loss of tidal and non-tidal wetlands in PDC 23 and implement land use and conservation measures to realize that goal.
- 4. Greenways and Blueways:** Support the creation of greenways, blueways and appropriate buffers from False Cape State Park to Stumpy Lake, Back Bay and Lake Drummond.
- 5. Trails in PDC 23:** Seek opportunities for public access and development criteria that recognize the need for differential use of waterways and trails in PDC 23



**Strategies**

- Set up Land Trust fund in Virginia Beach Friends of Parks and Recreation
  - Seek living trusts and living will donations
  - Establish the trust as a non-profit foundation or perhaps a subcommittee of the Parks and Recreation Commission
- Develop an Open Space Plan for each jurisdiction according to code
  - Tie all plans together by HRPDC in a regional plan
  - Need communication and education within HRPDC to demonstrate the benefits of an open space plan
  - Includes environmental, land and water, recreation, transportation, economic development, education, agricultural reserves, quality of life, trails, blueways and greenways, agricultural tourism, eco-tourism, and heritage tourism
  - Establish a citizen advisory committee to oversee plan development
  - Submit plans to elected officials for approval
  - Include public hearings and citizen input, which can be used as an educational opportunity
- Develop an Agriculture Reserve Program
  - Educate the populace about public service tradeoffs
  - Work with estate planning people
  - Create incentives for the public to take part
  - Support an agricultural use taxation program
  - Solicit broad-based citizen support/input
  - Coordinate the program with the cooperative extension and other appropriate state and federal agencies.

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**Virginia Land Trusts**

(If your organization approves this Strategic Plan,  
your name will be added here.)

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